

HILLTOPS IN
GALILEE



HAROLD SPEAKMAN



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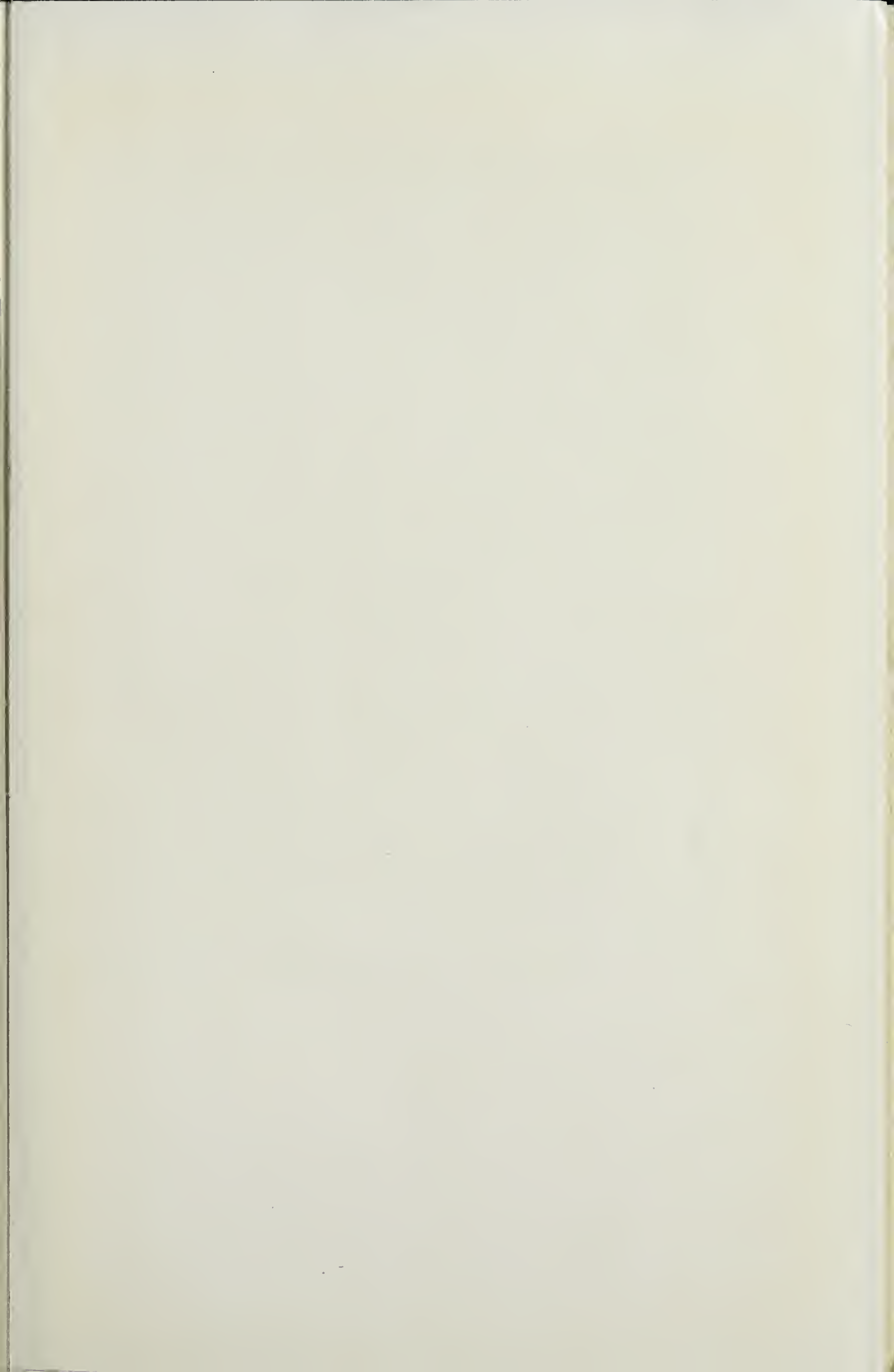


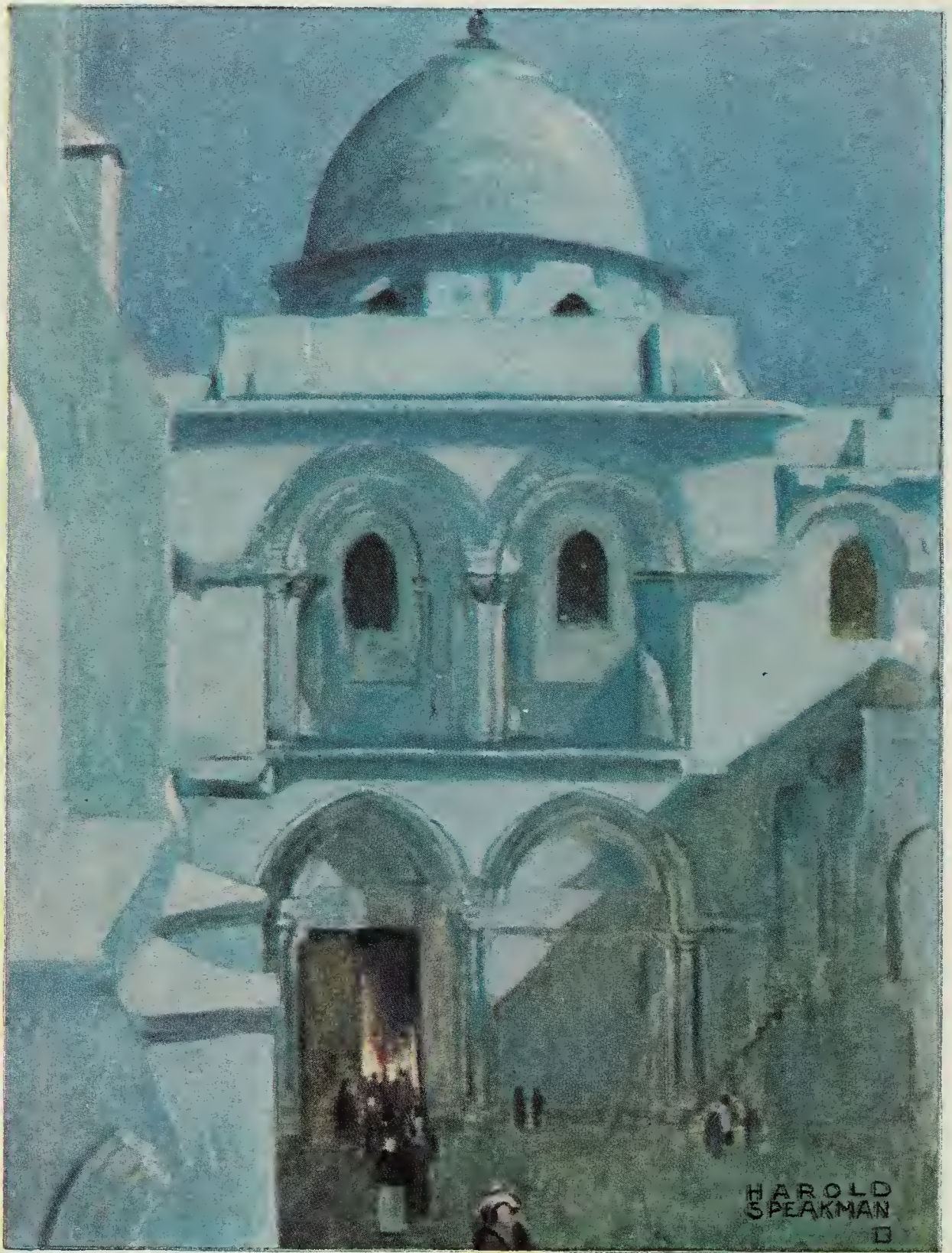
BOOKS BY
HAROLD SPEAKMAN

HILLTOPS IN GALILEE

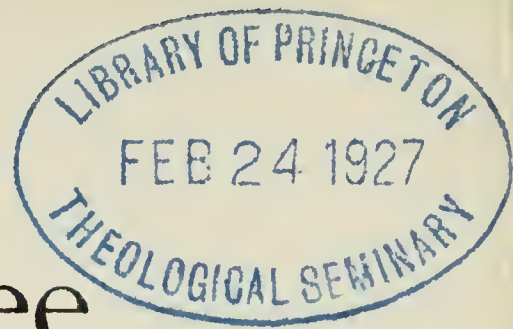
BEYOND SHANGHAI

FROM A SOLDIER'S HEART





On its battered pillars may still be seen many small crosses cut by the Crusaders. Its walls have echoed to desperate fighting and to the praise of numberless pilgrims. The Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Jerusalem.



Hilltops in Galilee

By
HAROLD SPEAKMAN

**EIGHT ILLUSTRATIONS IN COLOR
FROM PAINTINGS BY THE AUTHOR**



THE ABINGDON PRESS
NEW YORK CINCINNATI

Copyright, 1923, by
HAROLD SPEAKMAN

Printed in the United States of America

First Edition Printed June, 1923
Reprinted January, 1925

The author is grateful to Everybody's Magazine, to the Delineator, and to the Dodge Publishing Company for their permission to reprint the accompanying verse.

He is particularly grateful to his sister, Anne Reed Ferris, for her generous assistance with the manuscript.

TO MY FRIEND
HELEN KEY STONE

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PREFACE

THERE is an old story—the “Juggler of Notre Dame”—in which an itinerant mountebank, wandering about the streets of Paris, found himself one day before the ancient portal of the Church of Our Lady. Entering, he stood for a time among the cool shadows of the nave, silent and quite alone in spite of the never-ending stream of worshipers about him. He did not know the hosannas or the anthems that they were singing. Such orisons and chants as he had learned in his childhood were long since forgotten.

But at last, hardly aware of what he did, he drew out the bag containing his battered hoops, rings, and toys, and, kneeling among the more worthy people, he performed such simple matters as he had learned here and there on his journeys.

Hoops, rings, toys. . . .

Yet the old-time writer of the story went on to explain very carefully that the Gracious Lady took no offense.

THE HIGH CITY

CHAPTER I

1

MISCHA YUCOVITCH and I fought the battle of Port Said together. The first skirmish came at dawn aboard the *City of Bombay* when a glistening-black boatman, once of the Soudan, demanded twenty shillings for taking us to the jetty. Mischa Yucovitch considered the navigator through sad, experienced eyes. In the long ago he too had lived at Port Said.

“Just like twenty years before,” he mused. “Why, for twenty shillings we can buy the boat!” Then he addressed the dusky profiteer in Arabic, and shortly—at a much reduced fee—we went ashore. Port Said is the greatest international junction in the world. It is distinctly a place en route. To get off of a passenger steamer, spend a few hours in the town, and then to climb back on the steamer again, is very pleasant; but if it is necessary to arrive with baggage by boat, and depart with baggage by train—woe!

Presently the battle raged high. The shrieks of the porters, the growls of the port

control, the chatter of the sanitary corps, the dramatic discovery of *six new shirts* in the trunk of Mischa Yucovitch, the outraged cries of the customs officials, the wiring and sealing of his baggage, the receipts, the telegrams, the checks. . . . And then, late in the afternoon . . . *ah, well* . . . the deep, mutual sigh of relief as the train pulled out eastward along the Suez toward Kantara.

Mischa Yucovitch, on the wooden bench beside me, was a dark, rotund little man with a large mustache and a neat suit of brown, store-made clothes. Anyone not knowing he was a Jew might easily have taken him for a Turk or an Egyptian. I remembered the evening of our first meeting on the *City of Bombay* a day or two out from New York. We had run through all the generalities about accommodations, speed, and the possibility of bad weather. Then the talk had turned to our respective occupations, and finally to pictures and painting.

“I was in Paris once for two weeks,” he said. “Do you know a picture in the Louvre by Raffaello called ‘Christ before Pilate?’ ” (He pronounced it *Peelot*.) “Hours I stood in front of that picture! I never in my life saw

such a face as that one; why, it seemed like I could never get finished looking at it. I used to come back day after day. . .”

I was puzzled. The man was a Jew—and yet here he was admiring “Christ before Pilate”! By all the tenets of his religion, that picture, I thought, should have been distasteful.

So I said:

“But you are not a Christian.”

He smiled gravely. “I was not looking at the soul of Christ,” he said. “*I was looking at the soul of Raffaello.*”

Later, in my cabin, I took out the business card which the little man had given me. It was a bad piece of job printing on a very poor grade of cardboard. Across the top ran, “Roger’s Silverware Free to Customers.” Then came a printer’s stock design, and below it the words, “Mischa Yucovitch, Dry Goods and General Merchandise; Notions and Shoes, Hardware, Paints, Queensware; 24-26 Edward Street, Braddock, Va.” The reverse side read, “One card like this with every 25c purchase.” It gave the further information that fifty cards could be exchanged for a teaspoon, a hundred and fifty for a tablespoon, two hun-

dred and fifty for a butter knife. In flaring red letters across the face of the card ran the caption, "Don't ask for credit. We don't keep it in stock."

And yet—"I was looking at the soul of *Raffaello!*" Here before me, in one flashing example, was the lift and fall, the highest and the lowest of Jewish tribal propensities—that strange, intense combination of spirituality and commercialism which has molded the race from its beginnings.

He told me the next day why he was going to Palestine.

"I am going to see what it is like. If it is all right, I'll send for my wife and family from Virginia."

"What is the matter with Virginia?" I inquired.

"There ain't a thing in the world the matter with it," he said, warmly; "but where I live, I just *can't* bring my children up as Jews. I tried to teach them the old customs, but even when they were small they said to me, '*Fader*, our Sabbath is on Saturday, isn't it? Then for what do you keep the store open on Saturday?' I tried shutting it up on Friday night for four months, but I came pretty near going under."

He shook his head reminiscently. "Besides, there is no Jewish school in Braddock. The result is that just now, my children are not Christians and they are not Jews."

In other respects, he had been doing well. The neighbors treated him decently. His was the only general store in Braddock. "If I stay there another ten years," he said, a little wistfully, "I don't have to work any more. But by that time," he added, "my children won't have any religion at all."

Spirituality against commercialism. . . . The earnestness of the struggle was in no way lessened by the fact that he kept a general store. As far as that went, he might just as well have been a bank president—or a collector of rags and bottles.

Mischa Yucovitch interested me. That is why I decided to let my own affairs—the writing of a book about Palestine from quite another angle—wait for a time, and go with him directly to Jerusalem.

2

So, from Port Said began the long journey to the north; the six-hour wait on the Egyptian frontier at Kantara with the black waters of

the Suez Canal drifting to the east; the flickering lights of the passport office, and the comfortable rubber stamp, "*Permitted to enter Palestine.*" Once aboard the express, we sat up side by side the rest of the night in order that two elderly French ladies might obtain a little sleep on the opposite seat. Then, after interminable hours of listening to the French ladies snore "individually one by one," came morning and the mud-walled town of Gaza (where the Turks once gave the British such a terrific time), and then the junction at Ludd, with a dozen phalanxes of food-laden Oriental pilgrims waiting to storm the Jerusalem train.

Ludd lies just at the eastern edge of the broad coast plain, which runs north and south along the Mediterranean like a strip of green carpet practically the entire length of Palestine. East of the plain is a great parallel range of hills culminating in the Lebanons to the north. Beyond the hills and also running north and south, is the valley of the Jordan, ending in the Dead Sea. So, between the Mediterranean and the mountain ranges of Moab and Gilead rising beyond the Jordan, Palestine divides itself into three great simple bands: the plain, the hills, the valley.

The wide central ridge is broken and made accessible by many transverse ravines, or *wadies*, running in between the spines of its rugged backbone. A few of these *wadies*, owing to the presence of springs, are fertile and rich in foliage. The majority, however, are barren, fantastic gorges, deeply eroded by spring torrents and spring rain. Up one of the latter the local train, packed tight with moist, expectant pilgrims, nosed its way into the hills.

3

Eastward, the ground rose rapidly. Little outcroppings of white limestone glistened on the grassy slopes, and the mud-brick huts of the plain gave way to flat-roofed dwellings of stone. I looked around for Mischa Yucovitch, for we had become separated in the crowd. Finally I saw him on the platform of the next coach sitting carefully on his baggage, with his eyes raised to the hills.

An intelligent-looking young man with deeply sun-tanned face, eyeglasses, a small mustache, and dark, penetrating eyes was standing beside me. A Turkish fez was on his head, but he wore his European clothes in a

way which showed that he had not put them on just for the holiday. He looked as though he might speak an Occidental tongue.

“What time shall we arrive in Jerusalem?”
I essayed.

“Thank you very much,” he said in pleasant, slightly broken English. “We should be coming there now. But the train is late because of so many people. It must be another one-half hour.”

“Have you traveled by this route before?”

“No, I am from the north, from Damascus. I have not yet had some opportunity to see Jerusalem. But it has been for a long time my wish to see the city and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.”

Involuntarily I looked at his Turkish fez.

He smiled. “You look to see that I wear the *tarbúsh*. In the East it is the way of many Christians—English, French, Italian, Greek. I am an Armenian. I too wear it, although”—he glanced around as he spoke—“my father was killed by the Turks. The *tarbúsh* is *internationale*. Besides,” he added, significantly, “if you wear it, some one will not always be looking at you.”

The train puffed slowly on between hills

formed of layer upon layer of smooth, white limestone into which the valley had cut its way. It was as though we were traveling upward through the first significant white pages of Mr. Wells' history. Ears cracked a little at the altitude, for we had risen two thousand feet above the plain. Small stone-walled fields ascended the sides of the canyon in series of mosaic steps. Above them, a hill town or two peered down at us. Then the whistle blew.

"My name is Korén," said the young Armenian, bidding me good-by. "Perhaps we shall some time meet in the city."

And here was the station, with the pilgrims pouring out of the train, and Mischa Yucovitch signaling me from the other coach. The Jerusalem station—but not Jerusalem. The city lies a mile away, around a hill and through a valley, beyond a white twist of dusty road.

4

Bewilderment! In the first flashing glimpse of Jerusalem I cannot claim any more intelligent emotion than that. Thirty hours without sleep no doubt had their effect. But where, in that intense, flashing brightness, was the Jaffa Gate? And the Tower of David? And

where was the high, proud city dominating its hills? And why had I not read somewhere of the dazzling brightness of this white dust over everything?

The motor swept away to the left up a busy road, skirted the inclosure of a vast, five-domed Russian church, and turned again into a quiet street. Still nothing familiar! Then—suddenly—as I looked across a valley off to the right, came a great heart-beat. For there, shining in the glory of the setting sun, lay Olivet.

CHAPTER II

1

WE arrived in Jerusalem at a time of intense excitement. Three great religions were about to celebrate their highest festivals of the year—the Jews, their Passover; the Christians, Easter; and the Moslems, their ceremonies at the Tomb of Moses. The Hebron Arabs—notorious fanatics—were already approaching the city on their way to the traditional tomb of Moses near the Dead Sea.

For centuries their route had lain directly through Jerusalem—in through the west wall by the Jaffa Gate, down David Street and into the great Temple Enclosure at the lower end of the city where the Mosque of Omar stands. In a previous year the government had attempted to divert their route to a road outside of the city. During the fighting that ensued eight men were killed. Now the matter was better understood, and the Arabs were to be allowed to pass in by the Jaffa Gate.

The byways were completely blocked by British troops—calm, bronzed veterans stand-

ing in silent ranks with the red badge of the Lancastershire regiments on their khaki sun helmets. Four droning aeroplanes circled overhead, and beyond the troops the sun shone on the silent, ominous barrels of machine guns. It was plain that in case of necessity the Holy Sepulchre would still be defended.

The Arabs came slowly up the road, banners waving, drums thumping, with raucous cries of "Palestina baladina, el-Yahud kalabina!" ("Palestine is our country and the Jews are our dogs!") If there were to be trouble, it would come now. A short command from the officers, and the troops clicked to "attention." They were ready.

On came the Arabs. As they approached the gate the head of their column half turned toward the troops, wavered a moment, thought better of it—and went in. The rest followed their leaders complacently enough down David Street. The strain was off. For the present, at least, there would be no trouble; everyone breathed more easily. The last stragglers passed in, the crowd about the wall began to disperse, and the troops reformed and marched off, leaving a few gendarmes in charge.

And here was the Jaffa Gate.

HAROLD
SPEARMAN



The keeper of the Tower of David. He sits day after day above the moat beside the Jaffa gate smoking his hubble-bubble and thinking about—who knows what?

2

It was not strange that I had previously missed seeing the Jaffa Gate. The motor had turned away from it a hundred yards down the road. Then, too, the gate would hardly attract attention if it were not surmounted by a modern Arabic clock-tower built over it with cold-blooded disregard for its simple sixteenth-century architecture. As I passed in, a bootblack wearing a pair of huge, baglike trousers called out, "*Oh, Mr. Ashby!*" and made signs that he wished to polish my shoes. That voice was to become very familiar, for its owner called all foreigners, male and female, "*Oh, Mr. Ashby!*"

In the city's wall beside the gate is a wide hole made by order of the last German emperor at the time of his visit to the Holy Land in 1898. (His mode of entry to the city was rather pointless; for, notwithstanding the fact that Jerusalem was under Turkish rule at the time, he rode triumphantly in, wearing the glittering armor of a Crusader.) But now I stood looking at the hole in some surprise, remembering all the uncomplimentary references to it that I had read. The writers, in damning the Kaiser in general, and his entry into the city

in particular, had quite neglected the hole! One got the impression that at best, it was a *kolossal* jagged desecration, with saw-toothed edges of rock and old plaster.

I know that all the holes the former Kaiser made are not good holes. I know because I saw him making some of them. But the hole at the Jaffa Gate is a very good hole. It is well made and well finished, with carefully built sides of dressed stone. The roadway is smooth and even. Access to the city is infinitely better and more comfortable than it could have been before.¹

Inside the gate stood Mischa Yucovitch. He had just come up out of the city and looked very, very thoughtful. I remembered an English friend of mine whom I had once asked to describe Jerusalem for me.

“First,” he said, “imagine the city of Bagdad.”

“I have never been to Bagdad!”

“So much the better. Just visualize what you think it is—minarets, domes, beggars,

¹There is a movement on foot to rebuild this section of wall for æsthetic and religious reasons. The ancient character of the city should of course be retained. But a restoration which will cramp and hamper the daily comings and goings of ten or twelve thousand living people seems to put the emphasis for beauty in the wrong place.

Haroun el Raschid, and all that. Then, when you have considered it sufficiently, squeeze it together into an irregular square, put it astride four flat-topped hills, and rebuild its light architecture with rugged stone masonry. Raise two of the hills so that the streets jam down into narrow, crooked rifts between the houses, running here and there into long tunnel-like passages, which are the bazaars. Add every unpleasant smell that you can think of, and—that's Jerusalem."

From Mischa Yucovitch's face it was evident that he had gathered much the same impression.

"Driven out of the land for two thousand years," he mused. "Every one of us is burning to see it, but—what is there to see?"

"Then you don't like the city?"

"Well—I'm a little off the track just yet," he answered. "I can't just say. . . . But you—have you seen your Christian things yet?"

"No," I said to him, "not yet." I had already asked myself that same question. *Why don't you go to the Garden of Gethsemane, and the Mount of Olives, and Bethany? And the Church of the Holy Sepulchre?* But something had answered, "No—not yet."

Perhaps—although I disliked the idea—it was because a Jew, Mischa Yucovitch, was with me. Perhaps it was because I shrank from finding pagan matters in my own religion which I knew were there.

“There is no hurry,” I said. “I want to make a book about all this; a book that is as honest as I can make it.”

“You want to make a *book*?” He laughed. “We have to make a *country*. You have your paint and paper and ink. What have we to work with? Since the time of the Sanhedrin, no one has made national laws for the Jews. Those early laws were made two thousand years ago, and now they don’t fit our modern life at all. For example, there is a ceremony for lighting the lamps on our Sabbath. According to the old rule, we should use oil lamps or candles, because such lights do not make men work on that day the way gas or electric lights do. When you turn on the gas or the electricity the old ceremony is obsolete! Yet there are millions of Jews who want to stick close to the old, useless rules, other millions who want to keep just the best part, and still others who want only a shadow of the old religion. Our people come from every country in the world.

From everywhere. Palaces . . . caves. . . .” He was silent for a moment. Then followed another of those wistful observations which seemed to disavow the general store at Braddock, Virginia. “The dream,” he said, “is always better than the reality.”

I remained silent too, not because I agreed with him but because I had been thinking for some time that if one can make realities out of his dreams, he is infinitely better off than if he never dreamed at all.

We walked back to the Jewish hotel beyond the Russian cathedral.

3

The central room was paved with large, roughly finished squares of red tile. Rugged gray stone walls, pointed with white plaster, rose solidly to the distant broad-beamed roof. The venerable host in faded gown of brown velvet, black skullcap fringed with fur, and a single long curl dangling in front of each ear, greeted us kindly. He was busy filling the lamps with oil for the approaching Sabbath which began at sunset. The handmaidens of the hotel assisted him. Each wore a single, short-sleeved garment, buttoned down the

front. Their hair lay in thick, motionless braids on their backs, and they planted their bare feet with solid deliberation. When they moved, it should have been to the accompaniment of ancient Hebrew instruments—the systra, the halil, and the dulcimer. Some brought in the full lamps. Others carried the empty lamps away. It was very virginal.

We went down to the dining room, a large refectory with massive arches and a blue dome decorated with yellow stars. The meal consisted of cold viands prepared earlier in the day—boiled chicken, *gefilte* herring, and compote of *mish-mish*, which is the older brother of the apricot. The herring was good, and so was the compote, and the bread and olives and cheese; but a strange, half-familiar flavor lingered about the chicken. Mischa Yucovitch and I took our first mouthful at the same moment, then paused and looked at each other.

“What is it?” I asked.

“Kerosene,” he said, with the slightest tone of irony. “Kerosene—from the lamps.”

Following his schedule of observation Yucovitch left the next day for Jaffa, and I did not see him again for many weeks. At the same time I moved to the Hotel Saint

John in the center of the city. Standing on the inner balcony of the hotel, one looked directly out upon the battered façade of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre which I wanted very much to paint. And here I again met the Armenian, Korén, a meeting after all, not very strange, for from this place he too could see the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

CHAPTER III

1

IT is not a large square—that in front of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Hardly more than thirty paces each way. The massive walls of the Greek monastery on either side make it seem even smaller. Opposite the façade is another wall which is not so high, with a small garden at the back of it, a few feet above the square. Beyond its trees and bushes may be seen the narrow balcony of the hotel, and beyond the hotel is a plot of ground called the Muristan. Here, during the Crusades, the Hospitallers, or Knights of Saint John, had their hospice. At first their duty consisted only in giving aid to pilgrims, but later, on more than one occasion, they served in the battle line. Their flag will not easily be forgotten by our present generation. It is a red cross on a white field.

The ancient façade of the church dates almost wholly from the time of the Crusades. On its columns, a number of small crosses cut

by the Crusaders themselves are still visible; and within the doorway, under a flat stone, lies one "Philip d'Aubigny, Knight of Christ." The façade is not beautiful. And yet, let us consider for a moment the history of the church. Hither have come kings, queens, children, hermits, murderers, serfs—a vast army reaching back through centuries of bitterest oppression. No site in the world has been so disputed as this; countless millions of people have set out to reach it.

For the first three hundred years of the Christian era, the burial place of Jesus of Nazareth was undetermined. In 326 A. D., while some extensive building excavations were being made in Jerusalem, Helena, the mother of the Byzantine Emperor Constantine, happened into the city. Tradition relates that one day when the queen was watching the workmen, the true cross came to light in one of these excavations. The whole world heard the news with breathless interest. *The Cross!* Two splendid churches (later joined into one) were erected, the first over the spot where the relic was found, the other above a near-by tomb where Christ was believed to have been placed by Joseph of Arimathæa. Then began a

chronicle that is unparalleled in the history of any edifice.

326 A. D.	<i>Built</i> by Constantine.
614	<i>Destroyed</i> by invading Persians.
626	<i>Rebuilt</i> by Abbot Modestus.
800	<i>Restored</i> by Charlemagne.
934	<i>Burned</i> by the Turks.
940	<i>Rebuilt</i> .
9—	<i>Destroyed</i> and <i>rebuilt</i> .
969	<i>Destroyed</i> by Hakim the Great.
1037	<i>Rebuilt</i> by the Greek Emperor, Michael IV.
1077	<i>Pillaged</i> by Seljuk Turks.
1244	<i>Burned</i> by Tartars.
1280	<i>Restored</i> .
1555	<i>Destroyed</i> .
1714	<i>Restored</i> .
1808	<i>Burned</i> .
1810	<i>Rebuilt</i> in present form.

These years have seen innumerable stirring episodes. In 1187 A. D., Saladin, the "noble enemy," was besieging a certain fiery old warrior, Balin d'Ibelin, within the city. The latter, who was in desperate straits, received the Mussulman's heralds; but not being at all satisfied with the terms offered, he sent Saladin

this answer: "Very well, my lord, we will ourselves destroy our city and the Mosque of Omar and the Stone of Jacob. And when there is nothing left but a heap of ruins, we will sally forth with sword and fire in hand; and not one of us will go to Paradise without sending ten Mussulmans to Hell." It is pleasant to relate that Saladin, who above other things admired courage, granted to the gallant old knight the terms he desired.

From Saladin's time the edifice remained in Moslem power, until on December 11, 1917, an officer in British uniform, trudging at the head of his troops, came quietly in by the Jaffa Gate and took the city.

2

Within the church, beneath the high-domed rotunda, are the chapels of the Armenians, Greeks, Syrians, Abyssinians, and Copts. They surround an ornate shrine of reddish marble, the interior of which is divided into two small rooms. The outer chamber contains a stone which is said to have covered the mouth of the sepulchre. In the room beyond, under a shelf of marble now used as an altar, is the tomb of Christ.

Yacoub Nseibeh, of an old Mohammedan family whose descendants have for many centuries served as custodians of the church, guided me with great care about the dim chapels and corridors, first showing me the tomb, and the place called Calvary, and later explaining the legends which cling about the church. Here Adam's skull had been found; on this spot Abraham was about to sacrifice Isaac when the ram appeared; this was the tomb of Nicodemus . . . here was the cleft in the rock . . . the place where Mary Magdalene had stood. . . . the column that shed tears. . . .

"Do you believe these things, Yacoub Nseibeh?" I asked.

"No—nothing at all," he answered.

"You Moslems believe that Christ was a great prophet, do you not?"

"Yes. But we do not think that he ever was here."

I asked a Greek pilgrim who spoke German how much he believed.

"*Alles! Alles!*" he said, warmly.

I asked a French Franciscan whom I met in one of the chapels whether he believed that this was the scene of Christ's burial.

"I believe," he replied with a friendly smile,



The doorway to the tomb of Christ.

“but I will not argue *too* strongly! This may very well be the place. Or perhaps it is not. But I think we must raise our vision a little beyond the dispute as to whether Christ’s body lay just here or at some other spot not far away. By all the prayers and the faith that this place has known, it is holy ground.”

And as I passed out of the dank, moldy interior into the sunlit court I thought to myself that he was right—that it does not matter whether it was in this square rod of earth or that. We can afford to pass rather quietly over the age-long controversy; even that controversy shows something in favor of men’s hearts. A staunch loyalty. A high courage.

But a day or two later I was to see something at that place, where Christ’s body is said to have lain, which was not to be answered so easily.

3

The Garden of Gethsemane, tended by French Franciscans, lies across the valley of the Kedron at the foot of the Mount of Olives. It is a simple garden, the work of men untrained in landscape gardening, who with untiring hands have made many small, round

flower beds among the cypresses and old olive trees. *Gethsemane*. A dusty little garden, only a few paces long and wide, with cyclamens and acacias, and a well in the center with a small arbor about it. Fifteen hundred years ago this spot was recognized as the place where the Master came so often with Peter and James and the Beloved Disciple. There has been no such conflict of opinion here as there has been over the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. True, the Greeks have made a garden just a few yards up the hill, but it might very well have belonged to the same estate. We know that the original garden was near the foot of the Mount of Olives, sometimes called Olivet. Here tradition and the Bible narrative fully agree. And here are the ancient, gnarled trees, one plainly many years older than the rest.

A Franciscan with kindly, sun-tanned face came out of the priory and greeted me as I stood beside the oldest olive tree.

“That is the tree of the Master,” he said. “And over there, beside that small pillar of stone, is the place where the disciples slept. . . . It is tranquil here, is it not?”

And then I said to him in that French which

I shall never be able to speak quite correctly, and yet which somehow serves so well, "*Mon père*—you have this garden with you always. Every day you may come here. But as for me—"

"I understand, *mon fils*," he said. Then he told me that his name was Frère Julio, and that he had been there for twenty-three years. Most of that time had passed under Turkish rule. Ah, those were difficult times. It was very different then. . .

At last I asked him if it would be possible to make a painting in the garden.

"Ah, yes," he answered, cordially. "Come any time you wish—to-morrow, Friday, Saturday. But not on Sunday. The garden is closed then. Come when you wish."

.

4

A dense mass of pilgrims filled the square before the Church of the Holy Sepulchre—an unimaginable conglomerate of people, punctuated with the staccato notes of a hundred red *tarbúshes* scattered through the crowd. Greek priests in black alpaca robes and cylindrical hats looked down anxiously

from the top of their monastery walls. To-day, Greeks and Armenians were to share the ceremony—the Miracle of the Holy Fire—and frequently in the past, it had not been accomplished without danger and even death.

The crowd below seemed to feel none of that apprehension. It was waiting for the church doors to be opened, in the meantime amusing itself with a candy seller, who, thrust into a corner against his red, yellow, and orange wares, was appealing to the police to be extricated; with an old man, wrinkled as a pomegranate, who squatted on a near-by roof and never took his unblinking eyes from the door; with a small boy beside him, eating a thick *puree* of beans from an agate pot. He dipped in a filthy paw, scooped out a large handful and, entirely disregarding the gibes of the crowd, inserted it shovellike into his mouth. A vast flock of swallows, excited by the noise, flew screaming in a black, whirling vortex overhead. Below, the throng seethed and pushed, jamming itself forward toward the church.

Then the doors, guarded by a dozen gendarmes, slowly opened.

5

I took my place in the rotunda three hours before the Miracle of the Holy Fire began. It was not too soon. The body of the church was already filled to the doors. A great throng of pilgrims had passed the night on the floor, but not, as the almost infallible Baedeker states, "in order to secure places." They were Coptic pilgrims from Egypt, who, with their families, had been housed for several days in the rotunda of the church and now sat in disheveled, ill-smelling rows against the walls. Between these and the marble shrine seethed a great, tumultuous mob of men, women, and children, each carrying a bundle of unlit candles.

And now the great shrine was being stripped of its ornaments. Ladders rose against its sides. Three Greek priests working together removed the huge candles before it. The bronze candlesticks, moving under the combined effort of five Armenians, were rolled out. Interest centered on two blackened holes at the sides of the shrine. (From these holes, the fire from Heaven was to appear.) Then austere thumps on the floor heralded the approach of a magnificently dressed *kavass* lead-

ing a church or diplomatic party to their places. The pilgrims, under pressure of the police, reluctantly gave way, staring at Lady Curzon, wife of the British Foreign Secretary, and at General Storrs, the Military Governor of Palestine, and at the Patriarch of the Greeks, as the parties mounted to their reserved seats in the galleries.

In the interstices between the great pillars rose tier after tier of wooden shelves, loaded with spectators. It was like the interior of a huge, disorderly beehive. Foreigners—French, English, Germans, Americans—some of whom had paid ten English pounds for seats at the “show,” looked down with superior, amused smiles at the singing, sweating masses below. Again and again above the uproar came the high shrill joy-note of Arab women, followed by unrestrained cheers and applause when their voices pleased the crowd.

Back in a dark corridor, a platoon of gendarmes waited with their rifles beside them.

The excitement became intense, centering more and more about the vents from which the Holy Fire was to issue. The Greeks were to receive it from one side, the Armenians from the other. There would be keen competition as

to which "side" would carry a handful of lighted tapers to the patriarchs seated in the highest galleries of the church.

A Russian pilgrim in blouse and barrack cap, grimly intent on remaining by the Armenian fire vent, was torn cursing from his place. In a box above me, a greasy, evil-looking Greek drank vermouth from a half-liter bottle. Another bottle stood on the railing beside him. A man in a *tarbúsh* was throwing oranges to his clamoring friends in some of the lower boxes. The oranges missed and came down on the heads of the crowd below. All this within ten feet of the sepulchre of Christ. I have mingled with too many crowds to be much affected by mass psychology. I am not easily stirred by irreverence. But I found myself hotly wishing that Sir Philip d'Aubigny, Knight of Christ, would rise up from under his cross beside the outer door and clear this place with the flat of his sword as his Master had cleared another temple.

"Why do they keep on observing rites like these?" I asked of a little English-speaking Armenian priest with whom I had been talking.

“Ah,” he said, “to stop is impossible! Every act, every rite that we perform is the result of a most bitter struggle under the Turkish rule. Do you see that small washing basin over there? We had to have a special *firman* from the Sultan only to be allowed to place it where it stands. Every picture, every lamp, every ornament—even the columns of the church belong to the various sects. It is the same about the services. If we should once fail to celebrate a certain mass, we would lose the right to it forever. We *must* keep on.”

A furious chant from the Hellenic side of the church drowned out the voice of the Armenian priest. Just at that moment an altercation arose between an English lieutenant-colonel of Gendarmes and an unruly Greek. A fist flew out British-fashion. In a flash I saw that crowd about me change from worshipers to potential killers. With shouts in their native tongue of “Get him! Get him!” they surged forward. In the nick of time, a well-dressed Greek, evidently in authority, *climbed bodily over the heads of the others*, and waved them back with a gesture of command. In another astonishing moment the incident had passed, leaving a Greek nursing his

jaw and a middleclass Englishman whose hand trembled a little when he gave some further directions to his subordinates.

Suddenly the body of an unkempt, unshaved man in vest and soiled shirt rose head and shoulders above the blackened hole at the shrine. He held a handkerchief on high and watched the aperture with fanatic intensity. It was the signal. Silence . . . intense, breathless. Then—simultaneously with a roar from a thousand throats—fire appeared in the openings, the handkerchief dashed downward, and the two runners in stocking feet sprang with their quickly lighted candles through the crowd toward the opposite staircases.

A howling, shrieking bedlam. A mad forward surge of the massed pilgrims. With incredible rapidity the fire blazed from the candles of one group to those of another. They passed their hands through the fire, laving their faces and breasts with it. They grasped handfuls of empty flame and pressed their hands on their children's heads.

I made my way to the door. Around me thronged these people who, with shining faces, were chanting in their ecstasy because the Holy

Fire had come down through Christ's tomb, from Heaven. I looked at those faces as I passed. They were rapt, exalted. They believed this trick. This, at the tomb of Christ, in the year 1922!

Somewhere, somehow down the ages between the Nazarene Carpenter and ourselves seemed to loom the shadow of a vast, unanswerable mistake.

CHAPTER IV

1

“What was that mistake?” My feet led me out of the city by way of the Damascus Gate, past the Governorate and up the right-hand road to an old rock tomb across from the city wall. After climbing the hill beside it and walking through a Moslem cemetery, I presently found myself overlooking a small garden filled with flowers and the rich, beautifully mingled foliage of shrubbery and small trees. Silvery ferns and woodbine spread over some outcropping weathered gray rocks at one end of the garden. Acacia blossoms and hyacinths filled the air with their fragrance, and the white trunks of young birch trees glimmered through the leaves of willow and Lombardy poplar.

“This garden,” said a sign beside the door, “is thought by many people to be the spot where our Lord was placed after His Crucifixion.” I had been there before. And now it seemed a cool and lovely haven in which to think about the events of the last few hours.

“What was that mistake?”

But no sooner had I asked the question than I thought to myself, "Who are you, with your writing and painting, and your restless wandering about—who are you to be thinking and puzzling about the world's mistakes?" Then something else seemed to rise up quickly in me and say, "No, no—it's all right! It's all right! The thing for all of us to do, is to try just as well as we can to *see true*. The idea is not to find fault, but just to keep on trying day after day to see true. Trying to look at things with as clear and sympathetic vision as we can, and then failing perhaps, but trying again and again."

Then, because that answered my personal misgivings, I went on thinking, "What is the mistake then, that has occurred in the long centuries between *His* time and ours?"

And as I sat there above the garden there seemed to come an answer. That answer was—*man*. Not any person or age in particular, not any definite quality such as intolerance or rivalry or jealousy. Just—*man*. Always expounding things to each other. Always setting up rules. Always explaining God to one another, with violence and bloodshed never very

far away to enforce that explanation. "God wants you to do this." "Such a course is directly opposed to God's will." "Your image of God is false. He is like this."

2

Indeed, I thought, that spirit played a part in the very beginnings of European Christianity. It is not strange that Rome was distrustful of the new sect of intolerant Christians who were not only unwilling to worship as the emperor did, but who demanded that the emperor worship as they did. That was the danger to the Empire. As early as the second century, Christian tracts were extant which made it very plain that no other religion would be tolerated if Christianity got control.

The Roman emperors, in the light of historical fact, were, on the whole, remarkably moderate. And what of the bloody fervor of intolerance that swept mankind *after* Christianity became the state religion?

"God is like this . . ."

And all along there existed that cumulative process of extracting parts of other religions and adding them to the simple basis of the New Testament. The substitutions of the third and

fourth centuries—some of them actual violations of Christ's teachings—broke down the simple, beautiful structure he had left and placed on it a fantastic formalism embellished with pagan ornaments—*one of which I had seen not an hour earlier beside his own Sepulchre!*

No wonder that the Inquisition followed, and the various savage edicts, and all the rest. Man enchained—but not by the Christianity of Christ. What had the Sermon on the Mount to do with these things? Man was not bothering then about the Sermon on the Mount. That was “hidden under the illuminated missal of the Athanasian Creed.”

Then came the Scholiasts hunting down Christ's simplest, most straightforward statements for metaphysical meanings which no two men might understand. Talismans, amulets, charms. There were times in the fifteenth century when to express doubt in Jonah-and-the-whale was to sign one's death warrant. Similarly, the first man who made umbrellas in England was severely rebuked for interfering with the work of Providence. God intended us to get wet. That, of course, meant that some one had God's ear on the subject.

We smile—but why? Only a hundred years ago, here in the United States, it was customary for certain sects to bury children who had not been baptized in the far corner of the cemetery so that they would not contaminate the other dead. This in spite of the fact that *he* said as plainly as words can say, “Unless ye be as a little child. . . .”

And to-day? Ah, yes—to-day. Why, for example, is there still a stigma attached to the term “Free Thinker”? Because about sixty years ago a body of intelligent men refused to believe exactly as our great-grandfathers did.

.

The sun was sinking. A warm light played among the willows and poplars, shining on their silvery leaves and turning the white hyacinth tops to chalices of gold. To see true! That, I knew, certainly did not mean leaving the Church of the Holy Sepulchre as I had done, disgusted and repelled. I had not been able to work back far enough from the things about me. The Syrian or Copt who seemed to desecrate the place by tossing oranges to his friends might in his way have had much more reverence than I. He, at least, was thinking of his friends, while

I was annoyed because my particular Protestant ideas of how to behave in a church were upset. The bottle of vermouth probably meant no more to the Greek who brought it in than so much water would have meant to me. A very real and radiant exultation had shone on the faces of the pilgrims. Why had I been affected by their joy no more than if they had been vague ghosts, grinning and gibbering in some evil dream? (Is not the first necessity for seeing true, the capacity for appreciating and understanding emotions which we do not feel?)

But suddenly my mind carried me to the inside of the Sepulchre itself; and I saw that terrible progression of a thousand years of black-frocked priests, some with fat, beastly paunches, others with heads like skulls, leaning over the very tomb of Christ and manipulating for these poor people the "Holy Fire."

Holy! And then my anger surged up again, and I sat alone above that place where Christ may very well have lain, raging intolerantly against other men—I, who a moment before, had been thinking so calmly about tolerance and the need for seeing true.

Then, as I sat there feeling quite miserable and beaten, the night came down.

CHAPTER V

1

I COULD not sleep. The small room in the hotel seemed to be holding me, binding me down. Toward morning, I made my way through the long lounge, past a glimpse of the church, down to the silent street. The moon flooded the Muristan with a white beauty. An occasional dim oil light flickered above the dark, empty bazaars. Overhead the night spread clear and lovely; and up the side streets small vistas, dusted with a pattern of stars, gleamed with the richness of ancient cobalt enamels through the black arches.

At my approach, a soldier stepped out of the guardhouse to the right of the Damascus gate, looked at me curiously, and said something in Arabic about Beduins. I nodded my thanks. But it would take more than the thought of a few fanatic Arabs to turn me back. Unconsciously, I knew where I was going. On past the garden of the afternoon, down the white road to the valley of the Kedron.

2

Moonlight lay like a white mist over Gethsemane. The little priory above the garden was asleep. The three green shutters at the front and the two at the side were tightly closed. I smiled, thinking of the other French houses from Marseilles to the Belgian frontier, all shut just as tightly against the night air as this one. The small iron door in the high wall was closed too, but a few paces beyond lay the ruined foundations of an old church, with a low wall from which one could see the Garden. Just before me was the place where Brother Julio said that the three had slept—Peter, James, and the Beloved Disciple. And there, with a black cypress cutting the sky behind it, was the tree of the Master.

.

3

Above the tops of the cypresses a change began. From cobalt to indigo. From indigo to the faintest rose. Indescribable and magnificent—God's daily miracle. And now, back across the years, Mary Magdalene would be coming up the hill outside the city wall, with white, grief-stricken face raised toward an

empty sepulchre. And in a few moments more she would be asking of Some One who was standing there, "Are you the gardener?"

.

I thought of waiting there for the dawn, but the cold was striking in. I looked up. Above the hillside rose the height of Olivet. The road was steep, in some places formed by the outcropping rock. Up and up it led, between stone walls, up past a vast cemetery, each grave a flat oblong of masonry capped with a gray stone.

At a turn I looked back at the city—majestic, immemorial walls. Off to the left, above the village of Siloam, the early rays of the sun rested upon the hilltops, but Jerusalem still lay in the shadow of Olivet. Dawn. And this dawn was—Easter!

What pinnacle, I wondered, would first take the light? The great French convent? The five-domed Russian church? The Mosque of Omar? No, none of these. The Jaffa Gate! The sultan's turret, caught in a noose of light.

Again—I do not know why—I thought of the priests in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. And all at once they no longer seemed to be mere mimetic figures wearing grotesque,

horrible masks, but human beings. Human beings capable like the rest of us of suffering and happiness—and love. . . . Then, at that moment, I knew I had found the answer to my questioning—His answer: Love. I looked down at the garden where Brother Julio and the others still slept. How strange and how wonderful to know that all over the world there are people who, without ever meeting and without speaking a common language, understand each other through that great principle we call love. And now the hilltops to the farthest horizon thrilled with the awakening day. In spite of the Great War, in spite of the Great Unrest, dawn had come to the waiting world just as before.

Up from the Bethany road, through fields of poppies and meadow violets, a glad message seemed to ascend: He is risen! Beyond the haze of incense. Beyond the mist of battle.

THOMAS SPEAKS

*I touched him not! I only raised my hand!
"Thomas," he said, "behold thou me"; and
then
He turned his calm, beloved face to mine,
And all the ache because I thought him dead
Dropped like a shroud. He lived! And then
the shame
Of having doubted, gripped me and I fled
Stumbling and weeping down the Kedron
road.*

*.
Whither, I know not. But the night came
down
And somewhere I found sleep beneath the sky.*

*.
Straightway, I dreamed he stood by me and
spoke:*

*"Thomas, upon a hill near Bethany
I heard thee say thou wouldst have died for
me.*

*I know thy love, and well I know the spear
That pierced thee too. . . . Grieve not. . . ."*

*.
I woke, and dawn lay white on Olivet,
And peace was in my heart; and overhead
A woodlark sang one high, clear note of joy
Upon a treetop in Gethsemane.*

INTERLUDE

CHAPTER VI

1

WHEN time permitted, Korén and I walked about the city together, much to my advantage. The Near East was an open book to him. It was only an opening book to me. But slowly, from the shadowy progression of Oriental images, new impressions were forming. Once or twice when we walked together Korén spoke about his work. He was employed, he said, by a firm in Damascus which made the tapestry, and inlaid ware of ivory and ebony and mother-of-pearl for which the city is famous. There were branches all over Syria and Palestine.

“Just now I am going about seeing the different *magasins* of the *fabrique* in many different cities. Sometimes when I see a thing that may be changed, I say, ‘Cannot you change this?’ Some day I would wish very much to become chief inspector. Then I may even go so far as Bagdad!”

“You seem to be very fond of traveling, Korén,” I said.

“Yes—I must always be traveling,” he answered. “I *must*.” And a pained look came into his face which at the time I did not understand. “If you will excuse me, I shall now do some things about my work.”

And he was off. I too remembered a sketch I wished to make beyond the Kedron.

2

An old Arab gardener posed for me, standing with his watering-pot over a bed of flowers. As I was “laying him in” with charcoal, Brother Julio came up behind me accompanied by a younger and more energetic Franciscan.

“Why don’t you do this one?” said the latter, pointing to Brother Julio. “He is a fine type.” And he spread out Julio’s beard, and patted him with the pride of a connoisseur showing a Franz Hals or a Rembrandt. “When Jean Sargent, the painter, was here, he made a sketch of him, and later he sent him a photograph of the sketch. It is inside. Would you like to see it?”

The little reception room in the priory, to the left of the hall, was filled with autographed pictures of distinguished visitors, past and

present. Franz Josef, the King of Italy, Alfonso of Spain, several grand dukes of Russia—and here, in a place of honor, was a photograph with “To Brother Julio from John Sargent” in a firm, powerful hand across it. The picture showed a bit of the garden, with the old monk in the foreground holding a branch from the oldest olive tree which had been grafted on to a younger, straighter sapling.

“*Dites donc!* You should make a sketch of him too!” urged the energetic brother. “*Le visage n’est pas mal du tout, alors!*”

But Brother Julio did not seem to share the other’s enthusiasm. “How long would it take?” he inquired, mildly.

“Oh, I might be able to do something in an hour.”

“An hour?” Brother Julio’s hand crept around to his back, and I saw trouble come into his kindly old eyes. “*Alors,*” he said, “I am no longer young. Jean Sargent took only—five minutes!”

The younger Franciscan looked at me and smiled. “*Mon vieux,*” he said, patting the other on the back, “but in all the world, there is only one Jean Sargent!”

He was right. There is only one John Sargent. As for me, I went back to my humble beginnings with the gardener. So, if you go to Gethsemane, you may safely ask to see *the* sketch of Brother Julio. There is only one. It is a good one and it is signed, "John Sargent."

.

3

I first met Mohammed Jamel on the top of Olivet. He trudged along beside me, making true though not particularly original remarks about the weather. Then he referred to the landscape. I did not care about being shown the landscape, and I told him so in that determined manner which must be the reflex of an inner quailing.

A Palestine guide knows all that. He is playing a little game with you. If he says, "That is Bethpage over there," and you refuse to look, you owe him nothing. But if you shift so much as a single eyebrow in the direction he has designated, then you are in his power. It ended by his taking me gently but firmly, like a stubborn schoolboy, to the top of the Russian convent, where the view is magnifi-

cent. Jerusalem, the Jordan, the Dead Sea, Bethany, Bethlehem, lay before us.

“Isn’t there an exceedingly old monastery somewhere off there in the wilderness toward the Dead Sea?” I asked.

Mohammed Jamel sprang to the rail. “I know! Yes, yes. The name—Mar Saba. You see that white streak? Good! You see that green spot? Beyond it is the monastery.”

“What is the best way to get there?”

“Ah, you must take donkeys. There is no carriage road. You must start before morning, very early—perhaps two o’clock—then you will get there in four hours, before the sun is too hot.”

“What language do the monks speak?”

“Greek. A few speak Turkish. I think there is one can speak English.”

“Would it be possible to walk alone from the monastery to the Dead Sea?”

He looked at me aghast. “Alone? Oh no. You can’t do that! There are plenty of robbers just now. Last week, even on the Jericho road, a motor car was taken by Beduins with four Englishmen in it. They shot the tires; then they took away everything they had—money, clothes, watches.”

“That does not speak very well for the police.”

“Ah—these Beduins—the police can’t do much with them. They are of the desert. They know only the desert law. They make what they wish; then they are away, across the Jordan into the desert. There is too much danger. I would not walk alone from Mar Saba to the Dead Sea myself.”

With this information, I went back to the city.

.

4

From the side of the wall near the ceiling, two small iron I-beams extended side by side a foot into my room. The builders no doubt had intended the beams to be imbedded in the floor above, but had missed it by a few inches. (After all, what are a few inches in the Near East!) In the hollow between the beams was—most surprising of bedroom furniture—a nest!

Of the couple that inhabited it the female was more devastating than the male. Even from the beginning, she made an unthinkable din fussing around and continually flying in

and out. The male spent most of his time on a shutter outside the window. He, at least, had a certain delicacy about making himself *chez lui* in another man's bedroom.

I think that he too suffered. Of course we could both see her point of view. The nest was hers and she had built it. It was her home! If she wanted to bustle in and out—what of it? Her mate ought to be ashamed of himself for holding back. As for that man down below—!!

The room would have been a bonanza for an ornithologist. Without half trying, and with no bird experience at all, I was able to recognize no less than six distinctive calls. First there was the small, fretful *chee chee* of discontent when the window was closed. Then there was a sort of gentle warble-of-the-good-life from the shutter top—like some one who cannot carry a tune trying to whistle the Bell Song from *Lakmé*. Then there was the loud, clear call of greeting from the female on the iron beam to her mate on the shutter top. As soon as the answer came, the female would immediately respond with a joyful note, loud and clear as a fire whistle.

“Hello, are you there?”

“Yes, I’m here on the shutter (where I belong).”

“Oh good! Come on in! It’s all right—he’s in bed.”

“Are you sure?”

“Yes, sure.” Then, whir-r-r-r—chug-chug-chug—and the perilous passage was made.

Still another call was a harsh, angry note of protest against the presence of any other unattached gentlemen of sympathetic nature. At such times the male was on his own ground. No hesitation now. He did not stop to take off his coat or roll up his sleeves. He just waded right in without consulting Hoyle or the Marquis of Queensbury. I had no complaint to make about that. . . .

5

But gradually, day by day, the uproar increased. Perhaps the subduing influence of my presence was wearing off. At any rate, the female would start in every morning at four-thirty with a most fiendish, raucous screaming to her mate on the shutter—a regular Dame Van Winkle! The four-thirty uproar seemed to be the whistle by which he went to work. He brought in the girders and

stanchions for additions to the nest, while she stood by and screamed in his ear and mine.

If she were like this now, I thought, good heavens, what would she be when she became a mother! I could foresee that she would be using my toothbrush glass to bathe the infants in and be complaining because the temperature was not right. So one morning as I looked at several new gray hairs in the early half-light, I made up my mind. I procured a ladder and set it up against the wall. Next I took an empty box which had contained three tubes, studio size, of Windsor & Newton's Permanent Blue, and, with the idea of closing up the house in the I-beam, I climbed the ladder.

Too late! In the bottom of the nest lay three small, speckled eggs. *Too late!* I climbed down again and sat on the bed with my head in my hands, while she roared at me from the window to "take that ladder away this instant." I did not dare to ask Saliba Abraham Said, who is the proprietor of the Saint John Hotel, for another room. He would probably have chucked the whole establishment, children and all, into the street and thought nothing more about it. Yet what was

I to do? There are some kinds of work which absolutely cannot be done in an aviary.

Korén finally saved the day. "My room is large. Please, if you wish, come into it. We will ask Saliba for another bed." And would you believe it?—as I moved my few *lares et penates* from one room to the other, that unspeakable bird—you know which one I mean—sat on the I-beam and shrieked a fulsome song of victory!

.

6

Across the eastern end of the city lies that great walled enclosure, the Haram es-Sherif—the indisputable site of Solomon's temple. Here, beyond doubt, were the massive brazen pillars, the "molten sea," the altar for burnt offering. And here, the orthodox Jew of to-day never enters lest he commit the deadly sin of treading on holy ground.

In Herod's time the enclosure was surrounded by double rows of immense columns. These are gone now, but the various mosques, minarets, and Moslem schools which face the vast quadrangle are relieved by decorative groups of cypresses. In the center of the

great square rises that magnificent mosque of mosques, the Dome of the Rock, sometimes called the Mosque of Omar. The exterior is marble below, and old Persian tiles above—jade-green, turquoise, and peacock blue—with the high gray dome rising overhead.

But it is the interior that is worth coming far to see. One might imagine that some prince of the *Arabian Nights* had called his genii together and said: "Build me a costly temple of many angles—a temple of intricate design with a dome thereto. And let the interior be as the groves of a marble forest. And let the leaves of the forest be of sapphire and emerald, and the fruit of ruby and amethyst, with the mellow light of day entering softly beneath a dome of lapis lazuli upon gold-incrusted walls." On a wide blue band beneath the cornice, in letters of gold, some verses from the Koran appear in which Mohammed acknowledges Christ but repudiates his relationship to God except as an ambassador.

"The Messiah Jesus is only the son of Mary, the ambassador of God. . . . Believe, then, in God and his ambassador and do not maintain there are three. If you refrain from this it will be better for you. God is One . . ."

The young, white-turbaned *mufti* who was my guide left me for a few moments. In the broad-soled slippers which had been tied over my heathen shoes, I wandered about looking at the interlacing pillars, the gold mosaics, and the huge, gray rock rising six feet above the floor in the center of the mosque. Here Abraham, earliest of the Jews, prepared to sacrifice Isaac. Here the later Jews erected their Temple and made burnt offerings. And here Jesus of Nazareth must often have come. Mohammed declared that one prayer at this place was worth a thousand elsewhere. Later the Crusaders built an altar upon the rock; while at present over the same spot are the Byzantine capitals with their encircling Mohammedan inscription about Christ.

From the standpoint of single religions there are other places, such as the Kaaba at Mecca and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, which are held more sacred than this. But from the standpoint of all it is the most highly venerated spot in the world. Mohammed, in his religion, Islam, accepted a great part of the Old and New Testaments and paraphrased them in the Koran. The Moslems—believers in Islam—reverence Adam, Noah,

Abraham, Moses, John the Baptist, and Jesus Christ as prophets. The latter's teachings are commended in the Koran, although, as the quotations above the mosque tell us, he is not acknowledged as the Son of God.

White-bearded sheiks sat in the doorways of the mosque, repeating the ninety-nine names of God, and the most sacred name, *Allah*. It was the month of *Ramadan* in which true believers do not break their fast between sunrise and sunset. In another half hour, the muezzins from their stations in the minarets would be calling the faithful to prayer.

"To-day is a big day with us," said the young *mufti*, as he accompanied me to the portal of the great enclosure. "It is the fifteenth of *Ramadan*." And he related how on that night, a little after sunset, the great Sudrah tree in Paradise is shaken. Each of its leaves bears the name of some one who lives upon this earth. The leaves of those who must die the following year will surely fall.

"May your leaf be young and firm," I said, as we shook hands at the door. His answer was exactly what I had hoped.

"*Kismet*," he said.

KORÉN

CHAPTER VII

1

KORÉN came into the hotel lounge his face alight with enthusiasm. "My employer has come to-day," he said. "He is *too* much pleased with what I have been doing. He says I shall be inspector of all Syria and Palestine!" He threw down his *tarbúsh* and stick and clapped jubilantly for coffee.

"Good! That is just what you wanted, isn't it?"

"Yes, it is what I wanted. To go about is my nature. Why not? My ancestors were from the Caucasus—soldiers and *kavass*. . . But not such *kavass* as you see along the street in Jerusalem thumping with their sticks to clear the way for the consuls. *They* were the *kavass* of the caravans."

Suddenly he became silent, with one of those quick, Oriental changes in mood with which I had become familiar. A moment before he had been gay, buoyant. Now he was depressed. The strained, hurt look which I

had seen before came into his face. "In the old days, I used to wish to fight as they did. But now it is different. Even if I should meet the man who killed my father, I could not harm him. Why? I do not know. Some change has come over my character. My conscience would be too terrible afterward."

"By the way, Korén," I said to take him away from these somber thoughts, "I would like to get some Armenian names. Some simple ones that are really Armenian."

"With pleasure," he said, brightening immediately. "Names of men?"

"Yes. Women's names too. Start with men if you like."

"*Sarkis; Aram; Minas; my name, Korén, Ara; Bedros; Khosrov; Vartan.* To make some last names, you can add *ian*. One man can be Vartan Sarkisian. Another man can be Sarkis Vartanian. It is like Frederick Johansson, and Johann Frederickson. . .

"For girls, there are the names Araksi; Nazeli; Oznive; Mari; Arovni. . ."

"Arovni—that is a nice name," I said as I wrote. But I do not think he heard me. He sat looking far away, twisting his watch chain between nervous, energetic fingers. Suddenly

he burst out, "What have I done? Why should society stand against me because I care for some one! And my brother beyond others, why should he try to prevent me? You wonder, perhaps, why I am gloomy. It is not my temper that is always too bad. There is so much else. . . ."

"Why don't you tell me about it?" I said. "Whatever you tell will be safe, unless you say that it may be told."¹ He looked at me closely, scanning my face with dark, eager eyes.

"When shall you go to Bethlehem?" he asked, for I had told him my plans.

"The day after to-morrow," I answered. He took a turn or two up and down the lounge, then stopped before me.

"I shall do it," he said. "In two days I too must go away—to Damascus. To-morrow evening, if you like, we will come back to the hotel from work and I shall tell you."

So I heard Korén's story (as much of it as was finished, for it was still in the making)—a story as beautiful as *Paola and Francesca*, as quaint and other-worldly as *Aucassin and*

¹This narrative is printed with the permission of my friend.

Nicolette. If you do not feel its poignancy and its charm, then the fault is mine, in the telling.

.

2

“We lived in central Anatolia in the town of Gurun. My father was a strong man in the town. All men respected him. He was strict, but his love was great. When I was fourteen he called me to him and said: ‘Korén, you are a grown boy now. I shall send you away to school, to a good school in Harput, near the Euphrates.’ Six days we journeyed by horseback to Harput. I remained there something more than a year. Then came 1915—the Great War, the fighting between Russia and Turkey.

“It was in the month of April that the school was closed. I wrote to my father, ‘What shall I do?’ He sent a man with swift horses, and after two days we arrived at home, where I was hidden away—for if the Turks found me, they would hurry me to the front. One day in May the soldiers came and took all the men of Gurun to prison. They took my father and my sister’s husband, who was

twenty-five years. They took my older brother, who was visiting us from Aleppo. But the archbishop of Gurun, a great friend of my father, went to the Turkish governor, and speaking about my brother, said: 'This man does not belong to Gurun, but to another province. You must let him go away.' Then they freed my brother, and he went away to his wife and children in Aleppo.

"But my father and brother-in-law were in prison with all the men of Gurun. From prison my father sent a letter to me on a small piece of paper. I think he knew what would happen. The letter came just as I had my sixteenth birthday:

"DEAR KORÉN:

"I am going away; where I do not know. You are the man of the family now. They are all depending on you. [Then he mentioned them all—my mother, my old grandmother, my two young sisters, also my older married sister and her four children.] You must take good care. Lock the doors at night and watch, that all is well. There is the *fabrique*. [For we made good hand-woven cloth.] If it should be that you need something, sell the goods of the *fabrique*. God be with you. I kiss each one.

"YOUR FATHER.

3

“The Turkish captain of gendarmes was a friend. Often he came to dine with us and told us about the affairs in the town. One day he came very sadly and said, ‘The soldiers are taking the men away.’ The next day the soldiers took the men out along the road—seven thousand from the town of fifteen thousand people—and killed them. They killed my father and my sister’s husband. I do not know how. . . .

“Then the captain of gendarmes came again. He was weeping and said: ‘Korén, to-morrow they are coming back. They will search all the houses. If there is a boy older than a young child, they will kill him. But about you, I have given your father my word.’ Then he took me to the *appartement* of his wife—something which no Turk will ever do, especially with a Christian. ‘You shall stay here,’ he said. ‘You see that I trust you.’

“For three days I stayed at the *harem*, until the search was finished. But when I came home I found the women weeping and gathering some of our things together. We had been exiled and must go away at once. We took fifteen horses—eleven for us (for there was

also a nurse), and four for the baggage, and such small things as we could carry. There was a large caravan—five hundred families—but there were no men with us except feeble old ones. A soldier came for the keys. We gave them and started out. We did not know where we were going. On a little hill, we turned. Our home. . . .

“The captain of gendarmes accompanied us three days to the frontier, and from there he must return. The governor of Albistan, which is the next province, sent gendarmes to meet us. They brought us into the city. ‘If you will accept the religion of Mohammed,’ they said, ‘you may stay here.’ All were looking to us—to our family. If we went, they would go; if we stayed, they would stay. . . How could we stay?

“When we started, an officer came riding up and said, ‘There is a large gang of Kurdish thieves in the mountains, who will rob you. We cannot spare more than two or three gendarmes for your protection, but if you will give us a hundred pounds, we will then give you sufficient gendarmes.’ We took up some pounds, here and there as much as we could—fifty in all—and gave to them. At last there

came with us fifty or sixty gendarmes. It began to rain terribly. At early morning we arrived in the mountains and saw the Kurds a mile away.

“Then, with my own eyes, *I saw the gendarmes unite with the Kurds*. They took all our horses and goods. They began to fire and to kill us. I saw my friend from school shot at my feet. One old man they threw into a tree and then the tree was burned.

“I was separated from my sisters. All at once four Kurds from the gang were before us. One struck me with his rifle, and at the same moment one put the blade of a sword to my throat. The edge was sharp. . . . *I remember. . . .* My oldest sister came running with a terrible cry. ‘If you are going to kill him, do not kill him with a sword, but with a rifle.’ Suddenly they asked about money. I threw our purse out of my pocket. It opened and some gold money rolled out. In the moment that they stopped to make search I fled. I came to my sisters. Then I fainted.

4

“The robbers left us. Again we started on. I was laughing now. ‘Why do you laugh?’

my oldest sister asked. 'Just to be alive,' I said, 'and now there are no horses to bother!' (I was very young.)

"Of my sister's four children, I carried one; my sister, the nurse and my mother each carried one. My mother's mother, who was seventy-five years old, walked with us too. She loved me very much and was always good to me, for when she lost her own son in the massacre of 1895, my mother took me to her at that time and said, 'Here is your son.'

"For five days she walked with us, and then at evening she called me and said, 'Korén, I am dying. But I cannot bear to think that I shall lie beside the road and no one shall say a prayer over me. I must die soon. It is better to bury me now, even with a little life in my body, that a prayer be said. . .'

"She lived all the next day (but we walked very slowly). That night my sister came to me and told that my grandmother was dead. We made her grave beside the road, and each one, weeping, said a prayer beside her.

"After fifteen days of terrible hardship—walking, and carrying the children from morning to evening—we came at last to Aleppo. There we were safe."

“But why didn’t the Turks bother you in Aleppo?” I asked. “It was still in Turkey.”

“Yes—but it is in Syria. The Turks do not kill Armenians in Syria.”

“That was several years ago,” I said. “I suppose that since the war things are better in Turkish Armenia.”

Korén looked at me. “*There are no more Armenians in Turkish Armenia,*” he said, slowly. “A million are deported. A million are dead.”

5

“In Aleppo, I went to school for a time. Then the few pounds my sisters had saved were gone. What was there to do? I journeyed to Constantinople. After three months’ *stadge*—soldier training—I became an assistant doctor. For two years I remained in a hospital in Constantinople. Then, on leave to Damascus, I met Arovni. It was at my brother’s house, for she was the sister of my brother’s wife. Even before she spoke, I thought, ‘Arovni is charming, she is beautiful.’ We had some talk together. There came some color in her face; but my brother said to me, ‘Korén, you are pale, you work too hard in Constantinople.’

“From the first moment, there was no other thought for each of us. And yet always there was a great fear. It is the custom of our country that no man may come to marry the sister of his brother’s wife. A walking party was arranged. I walked beside her. ‘We have some things to talk about,’ I said, ‘but not opportunity. We will write.’ Next day came a letter from Arovni. ‘I cannot write the things I would wish to speak,’ she said.

“So I arranged to see her, though we do not often meet—young man and girl alone together.

“Upon that day we told each other what we knew.

“But on another day my brother’s wife saw us speaking together, and in the same hour she found a letter which Arovni had written to me. Then my brother called me to him.

“‘Is it true, Korén, that you love Arovni?’ he asked me. Then, when I told him, he said, ‘But you know that the custom of our people is such that you cannot marry the sister of your brother’s wife. She is your sister too.’

“‘I know the custom,’ I said, ‘but still I love Arovni.’

“‘Korén,’ he said, ‘you will not marry her.’

It is the honor of our family. She is my wife's sister. Then how can you love her?

“‘What do you wish?’ I asked him.

“‘Promise you will not write to Arovni nor see her for three years. If you still care for her after that, then in spite of our custom, you shall marry.’ At last, with great sadness, I accepted his wish. ‘If I write, it will be in your care,’ I said. ‘But I must see Arovni once again.’

6

“So, for a few moments, I saw her. ‘Arovni, do you care for me?’

“‘Korén, I love you,’ she said. I said those words too. . . Then I told her the thing my brother demanded, and that I had sworn. And I said, ‘Each one is against us—our brothers, your mother—each one in your family and mine. We may be separated for three years, for I have given my word I shall not try to see you or to write. You may perhaps hear that I am not loving you, that I am with some one else. Do not believe these things unless you hear from my own lips, ‘I do not love you.’

“Then Arovni was weeping and said, ‘Korén—Korén—take me with you!’ And I too could not keep from weeping, and said,

‘No, Arovni—you will be an ideal for me. I will work and work for you, and some day I will come back, I will always be loving you.’
Then I went away.”

CHAPTER VIII

1

“IN Constantinople I could not work. The Turks seemed always and always more hateful. With a friend I resolved to escape. We got away at night, crossed the Bosphor, and came to Emir Feisal in Mesopotamia. He wished us to stay with his army, but we would not. For thirteen days we went across the desert with camels, from Akabar to Suez, and then from Suez to Cairo.

“It is not good for a young man in Egypt. But I was always thinking if one day Arovni asks me, ‘Korén, were you with the women of Egypt?’ I shall say ‘No.’ (Before that time such a thing would be a fault. After I have known Arovni it would be too great a fault.)

“For two years I lived in Egypt. I was always *triste*, for I was always, always thinking of her. I moved about. It was difficult to stay in one place—as it is now. At last I decided to go to the Soudan. Everything was arranged. But my friend said to me: ‘You love Arovni, yet you are going still fur-

ther away. You are a fool.' Then, as I hesitated, came a letter from my mother and my younger sisters, to come back to Aleppo, for General Allenby had taken the city. I went. In Aleppo, in the General Headquarters of the Desert Mounted Corps, I became an interpreter to the British. When they left Aleppo we went to Adana, where everything was all right for Armenian people.

"Then one day we were informed that Arovni and her family were on a visit to Cilicia. They would come to our home in Adana. I said to my brother, 'It is not yet three years; I must go away.' But he answered: 'No, stay. You may not show our other guests by going away that there is something between you.'

"Arovni came. We had no opportunity to speak; but her face, her smile, showed me what I wished to know. Then she went away.

2

"In that last year of waiting, words came from time to time concerning Arovni. Some people said: 'She is not loving you any more. She is forgetting you.' Even my brother said: 'Korén, she is not of suitable character for you. She loves others. If she were a good girl, I

should say nothing. How can you love a girl if she is loving others?"

"I said to my brother to be silent in these things. 'If I do not see with my own eyes and hear with my own ears, I shall believe in Arovni.' Then my brother would come to the thing that was in his mind. 'Korén, you will not do it. She is the sister of my wife. She is your own sister too!"

"Once they told me that she would marry. I could not bear that, though I did not believe. I searched a means to go to Damascus. It was difficult, for the Turks and the French were at war. The trains were stopped between Mersina and Adana. At last I walked from Adana to the sea, taking some things to sell (but that was only to have a reason). After some days I came to Beyrout and then to Damascus.

"At Damascus, how could I see Arovni? I had given my word. I battled all night with my mind to know what thing to do. At last I went to the man they said she would marry. We dined together; we talked of many things. But *en fin* I said, 'Hayk, why do you not marry?"

"He said, 'I have no girl to marry.' (But

I knew he was thinking of a girl. He was so very *triste*.) So I said, 'Why do you not marry Arovni?'

"'How could I marry her,' he said, 'when she is loving another?'

"'But how can you know that?'

"'Ah!' he said, 'I wrote her a letter; I gave it to her directly. But she sent it back by her mother and brother.'

"It was just at that place that I was again sure of Arovni. I returned to Adana with a light heart.

3

"The three years were finished! We were all in Damascus again, we were to dine at Arovni's house. They did not wish me there, but were ashamed not to be asking me, because I was one of the nearest relatives. Arovni met me at the door. With an even voice I said, '*Hello, Arovni—how are you?*'

"'I am very well,' she answered, as though she saw me every day. '*Welcome.*'

"'Where is your family?'

"'Upstairs,' she said. We spoke these things that were nothing, but beyond them was a deep gladness.

“During those years she had gone to school; she knew French; she knew how to sew and had made much progress. To show me what she had done, she began to speak in French—not directly to me—and about poesy and music. My heart was too glad because of Arovni.

“Later I came again to the house. But her mother met me and said: ‘That matter is all settled, Korén. Your brother came to Arovni, and it was arranged that this marriage is impossible. She does not care for you.’

“I stood up, and there came some darkness before me so that I could not see the mother’s face. I cried, ‘Call Arovni! Let her say this thing before me!’ But she would not. I went to my brother’s house. It was a terrible night, I on one side seeing that we would be unhappy all our lives, they on the other side saying, ‘Why shall he sacrifice his family?’ and my brother always thinking of his wife’s honor that I should not marry her sister.

“At last after many hours, I said to my brother, ‘I will go away.’ But he said: ‘Korén, I have only one brother. I cannot lose you.’ Then my brother’s wife wept gently and said: ‘Korén, I too am thinking of you. What can I

do? It is between you and me. If you love her, marry her.”

Korén rose and strode forward and back across the room. “What could I do then? I found work. I came away from Damascus, and now I go from city to city. Last week, Vartan, my friend, has brought a letter from me to Arovni. She took it. She became pale, then she returned it to him saying, ‘No, I cannot take the letter.’ ”

He was silent for a moment, then he burst out, “Tell me—what shall I do?”

“I do not know how to answer that, Korén,” I said. “Sometimes giving advice is easy enough. But here, you have love on both sides.”

“Ah—that is what I wished you to see,” he said, eagerly. “Love on both sides!” He was silent, pacing the floor again. Then, “I have waited three years. Perhaps in a year or two years more—”

“How old is Arovni?” I interrupted.

“Arovni? She is just nineteen.”

Only nineteen! “Korén,” I said, speaking my thought out quite frankly, “I should like to see Arovni.”

He stopped in front of me and looked long and searchingly into my face. Then his eyes lit up. "It is difficult, for she must always stay in the house when I am in the city. But when you come to Damascus—we shall see."

“STILLE NACHT . . .”

CHAPTER IX

I

I TOOK the road for Bethlehem at five. Five is early even for Palestine. The oil lamps by the Jaffa Gate still flickered in the pale light. The valley of Hinnom was just beginning to stir a little to the first signals of approaching day from the barnyard animals in the villages which lay beyond. Up the road came small knots of people, trudging afoot after their donkeys—men with crates of garden produce, boys carrying braces of fowl, women with trays of milk-jars balanced on their heads.

These are the lowly, faithful ones of the brotherhood of all cities. There is a sort of wistfulness about their common lot, for the only time we notice them at all is when they are unfaithful! Among their number are the paper boys and the man who brings the rolls and the milkman (he gets a little restive occasionally) and the truck-garden men. And here were their fellows coming silently through the gray dawn up the Bethlehem road.

Skirting down the valley, the way turned

to the right and crossed abruptly over a massive bridge. I reached the opposite height just as day was breaking. Along came a string of camels laden with building stone, the two handsomest (if a camel may be called handsome) wearing double strings of large blue beads about their necks to bring good luck and particularly to ward off the nefarious "evil eye of envy." (Without those highly protective beads a single look from the wrong person would be fatal!) Then two little girls came marching along carrying water tins on their precarious heads. One of them stopped and said, "*Baksheesh', baksheesh'*" in a nonchalant, impersonal manner, just as though asking for "a gift" were exactly the same thing as saying "Good day." But when I answered "*La; la; imshi!*" (No; no; go chase yourself!) as one sometimes must, she laughed and scampered light-heartedly after the other, water tin and all.

Presently the road left the valley to traverse some fertile, rolling country with red-roofed villages among cypress trees in the distance—the sort of landscape one constantly sees fringing the Mediterranean—certainly not an unusual scene. And yet it was right on this

HAROLD
SPEAKMAN



Where the stars go gently by. Bethlehem.

same peaceful plain that a Semitic chief in the long ago fought desperately for his country against powerful enemies from the southwest. If he had lost, we would have been the losers too, for his name was David.

And here, in this ordinary landscape, to the left of the road, is a small, round well, with a stone beside it hollowed out to make a basin. I went past—stopped—and then came slowly back. It was the Well of the Magi! The well where the mysterious travelers from the East (so an old legend relates) sat down to rest and again saw the star they had lost, reflected on its surface. The Well of the Magi! And I went up the hill beyond, wondering how many such wells we pass, with the stars we have lost shining there again for us. Just because the road is a little long and dusty. . .

2

A small procession came plodding over the hill. First, a man in a rusty black suit bearing a staff topped by a silver cross. He carried the staff with great care, looking up every few paces to see that the cross was directly to the front. Behind him trudged another, carefully holding a small coffin in his arms. Its

diminutive outline was pathetically visible through a piece of cheap geranium-colored silk which covered it. The burden was light, for the bearer walked quite erect, looking directly before him. The others followed in what order they chose, some in native dress, some in stiff, badly cut store clothes. With serious, perplexed eyes, they regarded the gay clouds scudding across the sky, the birds nesting in the trees, the newly opened buds of roadside flowers.

At a hilltop, beyond a monastery dedicated to Elisha, a deepening gorge runs to the Dead Sea. To the right is the tomb of Rachel, one of the few monuments which are the property of the Jews. A little town is visible on the hilltop beyond. In the fields at either side some of the most touching and beautiful incidents in human experience have occurred. Here Jacob buried his beloved wife. Here also took place that lovely idyl of a courageous, loyal-hearted girl named Ruth, and a young husbandman who was good to his gleaners. And, certainly not far from these hillsides, a little lad, the smallest son of Jesse, was scolded by his older brother for leaving his sheep. In the sadder time of Jeremiah a handful of

refugees, making their way to Egypt, found shelter here at an inn called the Khan Chimhan.

We do not hear of that same khan for a great many years, not indeed until Luke the physician relates another story for us. Very near the beginning of the story he mentions the khan again.

“There was no room for them in the inn. . .”

CAROL

*Blessed Lady, swete and goode,
Give him of your gentle foode.*

*Father Joseph, night and daye,
Never down to slepe he laye.*

*Caspar and Prince Melchior
Broghten gifts, full half a score.*

*While Balthasar, derk of face,
Beren gold with manly grace.*

*Shepherds ouden yonder hille
Knelen down with voices stille.*

.
*Little babe, in manger stalle,
Blesse us one, and blesse us alle.*

CHAPTER X

1

I SAT upon the doorstep of the house of André Zmuri in Bethlehem. To the east above the hills of Moab, a complete, gorgeous bow of color spanned the sky. It was hardly a rainbow. There had been no rain for weeks. Still, there it was—shimmering against an opaque, blue-green haze, while the fortress-like Church of the Nativity, lit by the setting sun, rose out of its green background in brilliant orange silhouette.

“I have never seen this thing before in May,” said André; “a rainbow without rain, at sunset.” But he was busy making after-dinner coffee, which is a rite not easily to be interrupted. First he slowly roasted the green coffee beans over a charcoal brazier until they turned a rich, reddish black. Then, using a tubular brass coffee mill with a crank at the end, he ground the aromatic berries to a rich, fragrant powder, thereby allowing all the aroma to free itself—the way our coffee machines do *not*. Finally he placed a little of

the powder in a small brass coffeepot and allowed the mixture to boil up just once. The result was coffee *sans reproche* (and *sans peur* of its being anything but coffee).

The water for it came from a pump three feet from the kitchen door. "*L'eau, c'est bonne?*" I asked.

"*Absolument!*" said André. "It is from a tank directly below the house. The doctor comes and drops something into it every week." This news left me quite unmoved. I had already been living in the house of Zmuri a week. If I were going to catch anything, it would already have been caught.

André spoke his native Arabic and also French. Jalila, his wife, spoke only Arabic. The six younger Zmuris—three and three—ranging from four to twenty years, spoke a *mélange* of languages, which in the case of Issa, the oldest son, included a little English.

There must have been a time, just before Jehovah gave the last twist to the tongues at the Tower of Babel, when the whole thing seemed something of a lark. To have asked your neighbor in the draughting-room for a pair of dividers, and then (after he had looked at you for a moment in a wild-eyed

sort of way) to have him come struggling in over the drawing tables with a hodful of unbaked brick must, to say the least, have been diverting. There was also diversion in the house of Zmuri.

The house stands just at that point on the Bethlehem road where a lane turns off toward David's well. The first floor seemed to be used as a sort of storehouse for odds and ends, including a broken-down phaeton and the huge root of an old tree. A dungeonlike passage and dark stairs led to the flat roof, at one side of which were two solidly built rooms each with its strong stone walls and domed roof. (It is this method of building which gives many of the houses of Palestine such an unfinished appearance. A man builds as many rooms as he requires, adding others perhaps fifteen or twenty years later when the next generation comes to live with him.)

The household included André, his wife, his sister-in-law, his six children, and me. And one of the two rooms was mine! I protested, I decried, I disapproved. But Arab courtesy is not a matter lightly to be set aside. As a final concession, André agreed to allow the oldest son to spread his mattress at night in

my room. I had not been a day at the Zmuri's when I learned another point of Arab courtesy. It was plainly the endeavor of all the family to keep the guest at the gastronomical bursting point. The culinary department was a little shed on the far side of the roof. Out of it came huge plates of rice baked in grape leaves, great bowls of broiled cucumbers which had been skillfully hollowed out and filled with meat, pitchers of sour goat's milk, pecks of ripe olives, cheese for a squad, bread for a platoon. And then, because I did not follow the example of the Spratt family and lick the platter clean, the good Jalila, barefooted and picturesque, would come in to look at me and then spread out her hands and make Arabic sounds to the effect that I was going into a decline.

I told her through André it was no wonder that Samson had grown up in those parts. At which she laughed and said in Arabic, "Well, since that is the case—go right ahead and eat!" On my protesting that the thing was impossible, Jalila, who spoke not a single word of English, lifted up her voice and cried, "*Come on, come on!*" with a decided Bowery accent, followed immediately by "*Scoot! Scoot!*" to

the children who had come in to see what the mirth was about. At the moment, I was a little stunned by this almost psychic leap into the vernacular, but it was shortly explained by Issa. *Kamán* in Arabic means “again”; and *scoot* means “Peace, be still.”

2

My room—high-domed and whitewashed—was about twelve feet square. The floor was made of rectangular, odd-sized stones, carefully dressed and fitted together. There were two doors, one leading onto the flat roof and one to the second room occupied by the family. Opposite the door a neat pile of mattresses fitted into a wide, arched niche in the wall. Beside it a high wooden clothespress held the household linen. There were also things on the wall: A gay Teutonic lithograph of a family enjoying Pfeffermintz Bonbons, from Vienna. A perpetual calendar presented by A. R. Michelotti, 3 rue Manthalon, Paris. Five color prints of the Virgin, all entirely different in type, two with inscriptions in Arabic, one in French, and one in German. A black wooden crucifix. A shelf holding a carefully arranged row of empty bottles.

At night the mattresses and bedding disappeared from the niche into the other room and on to the roof, where some of the male Zmuris slept. They tried to prevail upon me to supplement the mattress in my bedding roll with one of theirs, or to do away with the bedding roll entirely. At such times in the East, Near or Far, one must be firm.

Jalila steadfastly refused to pose for a sketch. I tried to allay her fears with pleasant information about my own antecedents. She was pleased to hear that my mother's name was Virginia, and that my mother's mother's name was Virginia (just as she and her daughter were named Jalila)—but she would not pose. It was only by exercise of the utmost diplomacy and tact that an oil sketch was to be had at all of the costume of the married women of Bethlehem. A neighbor finally consented to run the risk involved (whatever it was), but it may be seen from the reproduction facing page 126 that it was not an occasion of undue mirth. She even requested that the blinds on the street be closed. It might have been a funeral!

The Bethlehem costume is practically identical with some of the French modes during

the Crusades. The high, conical hat covered with its flaming white kerchief, the voluminous skirts and broad sleeves, the squares of embroidery, may all be found in Frankish styles of the day. Then, too, there is evidence in plenty that the French Crusaders brought their ladies to Bethlehem and that since the Crusades the little town has been comparatively undisturbed by the events which have shaken Jerusalem; (and after all, since the ladies of France set the modes in such an imperious manner to-day, is there any reason for us to doubt their efficiency then?)

3

Bethlehem is distinctly mediæval. It abounds in flying buttresses, arches, cloisters, nunneries, friaries, mullioned windows, and streets that are flights of stairs. More than any of these, the brightly embroidered, Old-World gowns, and the white, high-peaked headdresses of the women help to give it the appearance of a considerably earlier century. Even its location is well suited to resist attack with mace, broadsword, and ballista. Go around the south end of the Church of the Nativity and you will find yourself on the

southern prow of the town with a valley on each side as in Jerusalem. Go back along the ridge to the north, and again there is a valley to the right and another to the left. Here are no such sharp descents as at Jerusalem; but the appearance of security is greater, for Bethlehem's hill is higher than any other in its vicinity.

The Well of David is at the north end of the town. His three mighty men who crossed the enemy's encircling line near Adullam, drew water here and returned with it to the king, were probably as adept as Red Indians at guerrilla warfare. One cannot believe for a moment that they brazened it up the main road with all the magnificent shelter of the valley right at hand. The fields about the town, dotted with olive trees, are fashioned like swallows' nests, one below another down the hillside. No room for flocks here now, for the stone fences are higher than they appear. At the base of the hill the ground is very dry, but a mile to the south the foliage in the valley takes on a brilliant green and the yellow ochre of the parched, sun-burnt soil changes to a rich umber.

There are three reasons for this. They are

the first, second, and third Pools of Solomon far up the valley.

4

Two hours' stiff walk along the road toward Hebron brought me to the Pools of Solomon—three vast reservoirs, for the most part hewn out of the solid rock, lying one below another down a narrow valley. During the ages considerable silt must have spread over their stone and cement floors, for the upper “pool” had been converted into vegetable gardens, worked by blue-clad *fellahin*, with only the slightest trace of a stream trickling among the vegetables. The second pool, brimming with water of a rich peacock blue, had recently been reënforced with new masonry at its lower end. From the lowest pool, which was only half full, a small stream gushed downward into the valley.

We do not know whether Solomon actually built these immense reservoirs, but it is plain that whoever did build them intended the water for Jerusalem. Traces of an aqueduct may still be seen along the Bethlehem road. Well below the surface, an ancient conduit constructed with astonishingly fine workman-

ship and still perfectly preserved, conveys water across twenty miles of stony hillsides to the great city.

As I went down the valley along a road which itself had once been an aqueduct, there rose from below that music with which the Palestine summer is so unfamiliar—the song of running water. The valley's base blossomed with luxuriant shrubs and flowering plants. Mulberry, apricot, and almond sweetened the air with their fragrance, and in the cool shade of young fruit trees the small sparkling stream splashed from one level to another over little shelves of rock.

A beautiful place in which to live, I thought—this lovely, peaceful valley, with the blue Palestine sky overhead, and always, if one cared to listen, the song of birds and the music of the tiny rivulet. Then I came around a large rock, and saw that some one else had thought the same thing before me. Below, among rich foliage, was a great convent of smooth, white stone, with a red-tiled roof and windows of gray glass and a high substructure of stone with carved balustrades. The valley divided, one branch continuing eastward, and the other leading north to Bethle-

hem. And there, indeed, *was* Bethlehem, sparkling on its hilltop.

I sat down under a fig tree and watched the sun and clouds change the eastward hills and valleys from one astonishing and delightful pattern to another. First a vast dark form would come riding up over the hills—majestic as the shadow of the winged horse of Bellerophon or some great galleon of the sky sailing by at a breathless height. Wherever it fell, the rocky slope turned to dark gray with green in it, and each olive tree was a patch of green with gray in it, and the sky in back was the blue of a turquoise. Then a strip of sun marched over the crest; and under its touch the landscape sang out in brilliant greens, and tans, and yellows like a battle hymn of David.

After I had watched an hour or more, I lay down on such turf as there was under the fig tree. A cool breeze was blowing from the Mediterranean, and rustling the leaves of the nearby olives. Languorous, delightful solitude! Then I lazily decided that before I left, it would be pleasant to follow the example of “R. L. S.,” who, when traveling through the south of France with a lady named Modestine, left a piece of money in the forest to pay for

his night's lodging. (A wonderful man—**R. L. S!** Instead of growing older, he grew younger. At the age of four, he put his toys away and said, "I can't be bothered with such fiddle-dee-dee and nonsense;" and then at the age of thirty he was playing at lead soldiers with his step-son!)

Yes I would certainly leave a piece of money. . . .

But when I woke the offering was quite forgotten. For it was painfully clear that a certain old adage about "the sluggard going to the ant" had been reversed. With great determination (and that is what comes of sleeping on an ant hill) the ant had gone to the sluggard. So I arose with haste, shook myself as free as possible, and went back through the evening to Bethlehem. And there was the coffee-pot beside the fire and the small oil lamp lit and the family of Zmuri watching for me.

CHAPTER XI

I

ANDRÉ held up the shell of a huge salt-water mussel which decorated the top of the clothes-press. "This," he said, "is the *machine* that gives work to the men of Bethlehem. From this they make the beads, the pictures, the panels, the carved figures of saints. You shall see!"

We passed up the narrow street and entered a small shop where a dozen men, crowded together on the floor, were working with quick, nervous energy in a thick cloud of powdered mother-of-pearl which filled the air and lay upon their clothes. Their tasks were varied. Some, armed with primitive bow drills, were boring holes in the shell. Others were sawing it into narrow blocks from which small cubes would be cut and filed by hand into beads. Still others were carving designs upon strips of the same material, which were to be fitted into miniature shrines. A busy humming of drills and rasping of files filled the air. Similar noises were audible all over Bethlehem.

(There was a shop just across the road from my window which scraped and filed from five in the morning until six at night with a scant half hour of rest at noon.)

The little town is honeycombed with these *fabriques*, for practically the entire male population works in mother-of-pearl. Besides the artisans who make beads and amulets there are those who build up pearl shrines on wooden frames, and still others who carve small statues and bas-reliefs of saints from that material to take their places in the shrines. But the work is done hastily and badly, and it is by no means original. In one stall after another the same figures, the same designs appear. A friend of André showed me his book of patterns—a collection of drawings copied in pencil from the very worst of Gothic, Romanesque, Arabic, and Byzantine decoration.

I must confess to a certain depression of spirit at seeing this intensive labor of hundreds of men for twelve hours a day when the resulting product was neither useful, nor, from the most generous standards of art, beautiful. With bowed backs and apparently bowed minds, they worked on and on turning out one after another of their badly carved saints in

appalling, complicated shrines. Exploitation plus human inertia. Their grandfathers, their great-grandfathers did it like this.

“Who carves the best saints?” I asked of André.

“There is an old man up the hill,” he said; “*allons!*” We saw the old man, but it was the same thing. Bad copies of bad copies.

“Is there no one who makes his own designs?” I inquired, a little desperately. André shook his head. “Not since my father died. *He* was a sculptor. There is none of his work in Bethlehem; but in the village of Beth Saho, a few minutes’ walk down the hill—”

We started immediately down past the monasteries and church on the southern crest toward a group of flat roofs below, André in the meanwhile telling me that his father had died at the age of thirty-three when he himself was only five. The altar piece in the church at Beth Saho was his last work. It was made, he added, more than forty years ago.

We paused a moment at the door of the little church.

“That,” said André, pointing to a meadow to the east, “is the Field of the Shepherds.” Then we entered.

2

André Zmuri was right. His father *was* a sculptor. The altar piece, twelve feet or more across and breast high, was carved in the rich, ivory-tan stone of the country. A series of panels side by side showed the Annunciation, the meeting of Elisabeth and Mary, the coming of the Wise Men, the Stable of the Inn. Beautiful, serious work this, as quaint and eagerly earnest as that of the first poignant, living years of the Renaissance. Here and there a halo shone in pale or reddish gold. Here and there the sculptor had painted the carefully carved leaves of tree or bush a faint, warm green. That was all. A wonderful restraint of color—ivory, green, and gold.

From the top of the panel farthest to the right the austere yet kindly face of the elder Zmuri's God looked thoughtfully down between shafts of golden light. About him, in a circle of clouds, appeared the heads of many cherubim. Longer rays of light, with a white dove hovering in their midst, joined the upper half of the panel with the lower. Below, at each side of a small manger, kneeled Mary and Joseph in the attitude of mediæval saints, while back of them and facing each other, stood

an ox and an ass. The sculptor had not attempted to make the animals foreshortened so that they too would be looking into the manger. They stood head to head in direct profile, like lions in a Babylonian relief.

The decorative, beautiful treatment of the hair, the crisp planes of the faces, the mid-air poise of the dove almost Japanese in its simplicity, the extremely difficult matters of the clouds and the cherubim and the shafts of light—all these spoke of a thorough, creative mastery.

“Where did your father learn these things?” I asked of André, who was standing by, radiating quiet, Oriental pride.

“He learned by carving small saints of pearl in my uncle’s shop on the hill.”

“In heaven’s name, André—not saints like those the others carve!”

He smiled. “No, monsieur, not like the others. Sometimes the others laughed, for my father worked very slowly. My mother has told me that sometimes we were hungry. But what does that matter now? You can see for yourself—he carved his saints well.”

3

We went down through the village to the Field of the Shepherds, a turf-grown, wall-enclosed plot of ground with some olive trees on it and a small, underground chapel containing a few broken shafts of columns and a trace of mosaic pavement. By merest chance—for nowadays the flocks usually keep to the higher ground—we came upon a hundred or more sheep grazing along the narrow road. There were two shepherds with them, a young lad and his chief, the latter a splendid old fellow with dark, grizzled hair and flashing eyes, dressed in a broad-striped *mishla* of wool. We sat down on the stone wall beside him to rest for a few moments before returning to the town. He seemed to be glad to find some one to converse with and told us that he had been a shepherd for fifty years.

“Do you stay in the fields with your flocks at night?” I asked through André.

“*La! La!*” he answered, quickly. “Every night I bring the flock to Bethlehem. It is dangerous in the fields after dark because the wolves will come along the stone walls and kill three or four sheep. For every sheep I lose, I must pay.”

HAROLD
SPEARMAN



The costumes of the married women of Bethlehem are similar to certain of the Frankish modes during the Crusades. Their quaintness gives the town an additional charm.

“Then the sheep are not yours?”

“*La.* From one family in Bethlehem I receive one sheep, from another family I have another sheep, until there are a hundred, sometimes two hundred sheep in all. For the care of each one I am given fifteen piastres (about seventy-five cents) a month. At night some live in a room under my house, some under the boy Jousseph’s house, for they are safe there, too.”

“But I thought that in the old days the shepherds watched their flocks in the fields at night!”

“Ah, yes,” he said, his eyes sparkling with interest, “but *then* the shepherds *lived* in the fields. They lived in caves—like that one. And in the old days the fields were large. Wolves could not so easily crawl along the fences and attack the sheep.”

We sat silently smoking for a while. Then another question came into my mind. I wondered whether he ever felt any stirrings over the fact that he too was a shepherd, here in the very fields where those earlier shepherds had been. I tried to carry that idea over to him:

“At *Noël*—the twenty-fifth of December—a great many people all over the world remem-

ber these fields about Bethlehem. It must be pleasant to be here.”

He looked comfortably about—at his sheep, at the surrounding hills.

“Yes,” he said, “the air is very good. The life is healthy. I would rather be here than in the town.”

Bless the old fellow! A true descendant of those other simple men! So I stopped asking any more questions and breathed deeply of his good air and called his attention to the beauty of the day, he agreeing with a vigorous, friendly nod; and then we went away up the hill and left him peacefully watching his flocks.

.

4

My stay at Bethlehem was over. On the morning of departure for Jerusalem, Jalila came in with four hard boiled eggs and a huge loaf of bread which she presented to me with beaming face. Her housewifely instincts completely vanquished the mere physical fact that Jerusalem was only half an hour away! I *might* get hungry. . .

Knowing that on departure small gifts are customary, I had procured a few cigarettes

for André, and a handkerchief or two for Jalila. They thanked me with great appreciation, but immediately I could see them thinking desperately of something to do in return—a result I had not wished. They hurried away, then came quickly back with a mother-of-pearl pin engraved with a star, a napkin ring of olive wood, some blue glass beads. Jalila herself brought a small pathetically bad wooden camel whose hump was an ink-well and pressed it into my hands with swift words in Arabic.

“That,” translated André, “is for your mother Virginia, whose mother is also Virginia.” And then I left them waving a hearty good-by on the housetop.

THE MONASTERY

CHAPTER XII

1

A LETTER from Korén, postmarked Beyrout, was waiting for me at the Hotel Saint John:

I have received your letter and am glad you are later coming north to Syria. When shall that happen?

In Damascus, I have seen Arovni but have not spoken with her. There are such questions I cannot write about, but I will tell you when I see you again. To-morrow my brother is going to Paris. In my heart is always storm.

Yours,
KORÉN.

I answered this letter, and then climbing to the top of Olivet, I made arrangements with Mohammed Jamel for the journey to the ancient monastery of Mar Saba in the Judæan wilderness.

2

The sharp clatter of donkeys' feet rose through the darkness outside the hotel. I

started up. Ten minutes to four! And there was Mohammed Jamel standing at the door of my room, looking in with mild reproach. The idea, he explained, was to arrive at our destination before the sun turned the *wadies* into quivering receptacles for the heat. However, at four o'clock we were mounted and trotting down the narrow streets toward the Saint Stephen's Gate.

As we turned to the right over the single-arched bridge across the Kedron, it was apparent that the work on the new church beside Gethsemane was well under way, as Brother Julio had promised. The substructure of the old basilica had been reënforced to its original size, and the bases of the new pillars were laid exactly in the places of the old.

Down the Jericho road, with the sun behind them, came cavalcades of Beduins from beyond the Jordan, following their donkeys and camels laden with grain. "How much like a motion picture!" I thought—the *Garden of Allah*, or *Kismet*, or *Barbary Sheep*! And then I realized what a strange pass we have come to when scenes like this make us think not about themselves but about their imitations!

A half-turn to the east and the day itself was upon us—tawny rose, with vertical, vermillion clouds reaching their fingers down to the horizon and steeping them in flaming orange. Against that orange lay the wide, purple band of the Moab hills. Purple? As purple as you can imagine it, with a faint wash of blue mist in front of the purple, and the sunlight in front of that, streaming magnificently over twenty miles of hill and valley between.

It was not yet four-thirty. "You must have risen early, Mohammed Jamel," I said.

"Yes, at one o'clock. This month is the month of *Ramadan*. Mohammedan man must go without food too much this month. The first gun is at one o'clock in the morning. The second gun is at two. After two o'clock, no Mohammedan man can eat or drink something until the sun goes down at night. Only eight days more. That's *good!*"

No wonder he wanted to do his traveling before the heat began! We turned to the right, off the Jericho road. In the half-light the brown, parched hills flanking the valley rose like huge folds of ancient, faded velvet. Here and there, as though the velvet were

worn threadbare, light patches of rock shone through the sun-scorched weeds.

3

But in this living, palpitating world of ours a landscape is (as a friend of Ben Jonson's once said) only a stage-setting for the things that happen to mortals in it. By the time we reached the valley's base two enterprising troupes of fleas—the Balboas and Pizzaros of fleadom—had left their native habitat on which I rode and were circling my shoetops in a frenzy of discovery, taking frequent samples of the new territory to assure themselves that it was really true. It was. I could have told them that myself. At last I descended. I descended from the right side of the donkey because there was a ravine at the left. I simply threw my left leg over the animal's head and slid off. That was the kind of day it was, anyway.

Whereupon Mohammed Jamel immediately came up and said in a gentle voice—a too gentle voice—“It is better to get off from the *left* side. You see, if some Arab sees you, he will think that you can't ride.”

We went on in silence. Should I explain

to this minion that I had dismounted as I did partly to avoid the ravine and partly from exuberant spirits? Never. Let it go! Rise above such trivial matters. Still—"if some *Arab* sees you, he will think that you can't ride." Suddenly I remembered that Mohammed Jamel himself was an Arab. How warm it was in the valley! . . .

Along came a flock of sheep with a dozen lambs frisking at their mothers' heels. These had small cotton bags fastened over their noses and mouths, making their frequent attempts toward nourishment in vain.

"Do the lambs have Ramadan too?" I asked, with attempted jocularly.

Mohammed Jamel exploded into pitying laughter. The sheep were going to market, he explained, and those with much milk would be spared, while the others would shortly become mutton. Without knowing it, the lambs were doing their mothers considerable service.

The road, following the bottom of the valley, grew more and more rugged. "You like to ride again?" Mohammed Jamel asked. I told him no, that I enjoyed walking, for I had once been in the infantry.

"Oh, that is nothing," he said, dismissing me

with a wave of the hand. "I'll tell you something." And he prepared in a pompous, elaborate way to relate a narrative. But not before I had thought to myself, "Mohammed Jamel, —Holy Land or no Holy Land, you make me sick."

4

"When I was in the Turkish army—1917—my uncle died in Jerusalem. He was a great sheik. He owned plenty of country around everywhere—cattle, sheep, and lands. I heard at Nablus that he is dead; so I went to my captain and said, 'My uncle is dead. I must go to Jerusalem.'

"'I can't let you go,' the captain told me, 'because General Fogenheim, of the German army, is coming to inspect to-morrow.' But I say to him"—this very fiercely—"if he does not let me go, I will go in three minutes anyway. So he told me, 'All right. GO!' I started for Jerusalem. I started over the hills at four o'clock and got to Jerusalem—what time you think? At half an hour after noon. The distance is forty miles!"

Now I happened to know that Nablus, which is the ancient Shechem, is not forty miles by road from Jerusalem but thirty-six.

Besides, he had come "over the hills," a route which would cut down the road distance by five miles at least. So I thought to myself again, "Mohammed Jamel, you not only make me sick, but you are a most shameless liar as well. Before I get back to Jerusalem, there is a walk I am going to take to the Dead Sea, with Christian distances to it, a walk you have said you were afraid to take. And if, when I get through, you say 'Pooh—that is nothing!' I shall be very much tempted to punch you on the nose!"

The way that we were following wound tortuously up the side of a rock-strewn valley. Ten minutes' climb along a somewhat better road brought us to the top. And there, slightly above us, resting on great crags six hundred feet above the canyon's base, was the monastery.

5

A knock on the heavily barred door summoned the gatekeeper. He took the official envelope which I had brought from the Patriarch in Jerusalem and departed, returning in a few moments with a large, stately, black-bearded monk whose imposing walk and presence were moderated by twinkling black eyes

and a predisposition to smile. The monk led the way into an open court above the canyon and up a flight of stairs on the farther side. Then, extracting a great jangling bunch of keys from his belt, he opened a door and admitted me to a long, high-vaulted room with windows and divans running along three sides. Pillows lay along the divans at regular intervals of about the length of a man, and in an alcove at the end of the room stood an iron bed. At a pinch, the apartment would hold ten guests.

“Sit you,” said the good brother. “I spick Englees not mooch. One other monk, he make Englees very good. I go bring.”

The pictures about the room were somewhat militant for a monastery; two were battle scenes of the Turco-Greek War of 1912, two showed stirring moments of the Spanish-American War, and two more depicted the high points of the Boer conflict, one of which was a Greek rendering of the Relief of Ladysmith. (How speechless with indignation the gentlemen of General Buller’s staff would be to find themselves all carrying rifles!)

The stately brother returned with his confrere—a tall, sallow young man in a black robe

like the other, with high forehead and long, curling beard. "Yes, I speak English. I am Brother Nikéforos, and this is Brother Arcadios." Then he explained most amiably that this was my room and that I was to make myself quite at home. Their ways were simple, but they would do what they could. Brother Arcadios had charge of the guest room and would take care of me.

"You speak excellent English, Brother Nikéforos," I said.

"*I am a citizen of the United States,*" he answered. "After I left Greece, I lived in America for fifteen years. I would be there now if it were not more important to save my soul" (!)

"Do you like living here?" I inquired.

A shadow crossed his face. "*I must* like it. That is the right way." Then he told me the round of his days. It might have been taken from the roster of the devout Saint Saba himself, for whom the monastery is named. In every twenty-four hours there were not less than nine of ritual and psalmody, and six of those hours of worship took place between midnight and dawn!

"It is not long," he said. "What else is

there to do? Of course there are certain tasks. I, for example, every five or six days, must bake three hundred loaves of bread for the forty-two monks here. But our general supplies come from the Patriarch in Jerusalem. Once the monastery was very rich. From lands in Roumania alone we had an income of eleven thousand pounds a year. But the Turks came and killed all the monks; so the estates went to the Patriarch. Now he gives us our food (though it does not take much food here to keep a man up because it is very hot). We have one meal a day; on Saturday and Sunday we eat twice."

The jolly brother Arcadios was standing by, absorbing as much of the conversation as his limited knowledge of English would permit. Now his face broke into wreathed smiles. "Yes," he said, "Sat'day, Sunday, eat twice. To-morrow—Sat'day!"

6

A desolate, savage landscape—a titanic ground-swell of stone topped with vast gray-and-ochre stone billows—surrounded the monastery. In the refraction of the sun's intense heat the hilltops seemed to sway and reel; they

gave the impression of crowding ominously in. Everywhere the rock was eroded to pitiless, honeycombed surfaces. When one fragment fell against another, it gave forth a sharp metallic note. Still greater hills like earthy tumors sprawled away into the distance. This was the Judæan wilderness. Through the middle of its desolation ran the ash-colored canyon with precipitous sides cutting six hundred feet into the rock. High above rose the rugged buildings of the monastery.

Along the walls of the canyon, numerous caves were visible, some of which have endured the rigors of fifteen centuries. In or about the year 460 A. D. a young monk of eighteen or twenty years named Saba, while sleeping not far from this place, was directed by the Virgin to build himself a cave in the canyon. Others joined him until in the course of a few years the gorge contained some six thousand hermits under the rule of Saba. Each lived in his own cave, but (according to Brother Nikéforos) they dined together on Sundays in a general refectory. The fame of their leader spread, and shortly the presiding Patriarch at Jerusalem sent Saba to Constantinople to adjust certain difficult matters with the Em-

peror, Justinian. The abbot seems not only to have been a devout man but a diplomat as well. Before he came away he had triumphantly settled the Patriarch's difficulties and also arranged with Justinian for a church, a bakery, and a watchtower above the canyon. Thus the monastery began.

CHAPTER XIII

I

How any man could live for fifteen years in the United States of America and still retain the fourth-century ascetic principles of Saint Augustine was something of a puzzle. I inquired further of Brother Nikéforos.

“When I went to America I worked for several years in a New York hotel on the corner of Thirty-third Street and Fifth Avenue. Then,” he continued, “I went to Atlanta, Georgia. At Atlanta I saw a Greek religious book called *The Sinner’s Salvation*. That was the first religious book I ever saw. I had looked at some praying books, but I never saw one that told you just what to do. It was a kind of explanation book. It said that if you did not do the right things, you would go to Hell, to Eternal Fire. . . . Then I sent to Athens for religious books, ten or twenty. Especially I liked Saint John Chrysostom, of the fifth century. After I had read them it came to my mind to leave the world. . . . When I had a chance I came.”

After this explanation, Brother Nikéforos was easier to understand. He might almost have stepped from an early chapter of William James' *Varieties of Religious Experience*. His deeply latent instinct, sharply awakened, had reacted to the grim, mediæval message which was at hand. Because he knew no other, that message had seemed to Brother Nikéforos a dazzling, illimitable light.

2

But Brother Arcadios—he of the black, bristling beard—took matters not quite so seriously. He showed me the monastery with unfeigned pleasure, its chapels, its monks at their meals or devotions, its kitchens, and particularly its church, every square foot of which was decorated with saints, bishops, angels, devils, and martyrs. An ancient picture of a very Greek-looking Saint Peter unlocking the gates of Paradise was enough like Arcadios himself to have been his own portrait. My mentioning the fact pleased him greatly.

“I be eleven year in monastery. Three year I be Peter,” he said.

We came to a small cave along one of the high corridors where Saint Saba himself—or

Mar Saba, as he is called in Palestine—had lived. Outside the cave a picture showed the saint sitting side by side with a lion. Brother Arcadios explained.

“This the cavey of Saint Saba. One day Saint Saba come in the cavey, see a *leo* sit! ‘Hello, leo, how you come this place? You like stay? All right, I sleep *this* side cavey, you sleep *this* side cavey. All right? All right! *Finish.*’”

There was another painting of the saint and the lion inside the “cavey.” Not only had the well-intentioned artist never seen a lion, but in some inexplicable way (and this was almost too much after Brother Arcadios’ description) he based his leo on a very imperfect understanding of a certain blue-faced, red-shanked, wrinkle-nosed type of African baboon.

3

The wells of the monastery were Arcadios’ particular pride. Actually, they were only cisterns, but in the Palestine manner he called them wells. There were ten, and they received sufficient water during the rainy season to supply the monastery for three years. I asked the old question about the water being good.

“Very good,” he assured me. “Sit you. I tell about.”

“One day from Bethlehem come doctor. He say to me, ‘Brothe Arcadios, how many well you got?’

“‘Oh, ten, maybe ’leven.’

“He say, ‘You got here small thing who go “Bzzzzzzz!” in air? Sit on hand? Sit on face? Bite?’

“I say, ‘Oh, maybe got few.’

“He say, ‘You also got here small black one. Jump very fast? Bite?’

“I say, ‘Oh, maybe got three, four.’

“Then he say, ‘Brothe Arcadios, small baby from thing who say “Bzzzzzzz,” *he live in well!* Small baby from thing who jump very fast, *he live in well too!* Small baby grow up, he bite sick donkey. Then he bite man. Man get sick like donkey too. Brothe Arcadios—*we must make finish those small baby in well!*’

“Then he show me two bottle. ‘Put a little of this thing in well, he say. ‘This thing spread self on top water very, very thin. Small baby, he come up to catch a few breath—*finish!*’

“I smell stuff in bottle. I make a laughing. I say, ‘Nobody ever get sick here. Maybe

now we all be finish!' But doctor say, 'Never mine, Brothe Arcadios—*put!*' ”

Arcadios got up, bubbling with mirth, and led the way to a little room back of the refectory. There on an upper shelf stood two black bottles. He gave a thunderous chuckle.

“*I put!*” he said. “*I put on shelf!*” And unless the monastery gets a more modern and less lovable Saint Peter, there the bottles are likely to remain.

4

The guest book of the monastery lies on a small table near the alcove. For twenty-five years it has received the autographs of travelers from the farthest corners of the earth. But is the first entry some such name as Mikros Karajas of Salonika, or Dimitri Karbounis of Damas? Not so. The address of the first entry is *Falls City, Nebraska, U. S. A.*, and the gentleman's name is *Smith!* There are other entries of interest.

“Ibrahim Banayot Aamur first visited Mar Saba for the second time on April 11, 1922.”

W. Wendelt of Berlin found the monastery *Gemütlich* in 1910, with a big “*Deutsch-*

land” half way across the page. (Perhaps that was only antidotal to “Charles Martel,” who, with the appropriate address, “France,” had been there in 1905.)

“Archie Bell, *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, U. S. A., May 28th, 1914.”

“Abraham Daronti” (this in French), “President of all the Earth and half the Sky, came to Mar Saba on the 2nd of February.” (I am afraid, Abraham, that you imbibed a little too freely of the exhilarating wine of the monastery. Either that—or you speak in rare symbols.)

Hermann Mayer was also a symbolist:

“Wer des Leben’s Unverstand mit
Wehmut will genieszen
Der stelle sich mal auf den Kopf
Und stempel’ mit den Füszen.”

Then in a large, simple hand, “Many thanks for the kindness of the monks to a weary Scot. James Hay, Captain of the 4th Gordon Highlanders.”

No wonder he was weary; *July, 1918!*

And then the austere signature, “F. Luther Long, Priest,” neutralized by another bit of philosophy in a Teutonic hand:

“Wie Einer ist, so ist sein Gott;
Drum ward auch Gott so oft zu Spott!”

And so they followed each other—from Amsterdam, Tokyo, Lyons, Copenhagen, Cambridge, Berkeley, Capetown, Essen, Basel, Pittsburgh, Cairo—some exploding into verse or bars of music, some saying their say with prose, others with sketches. There was a water-color drawing of an angel signed—but not by the artist—“Fra Angelico.” For the impiety of that forged signature I am inclined to accuse Hermann Mayer or Abraham Daronti. In the hand of F. Luther Long, Priest, appeared three feminine entries: “Miss Drysdale, Miss Oglethorpe, and Miss Walker,” followed by the cabalistic parenthesis, “(In the Tower).” I was still puzzling over that when I saw the signature of the Military Governor of Palestine, “Ronald Storrs, Governor. Monica Storrs *in the tower.*”

“What is this—*in the tower?*” I inquired of Brother Nikéforos, who was talking near by with Arcadios.

“Do you see the square tower outside of the wall? It is for women. They cannot enter the monastery. It is the rule of Saint Saba.”

“Have any women ever broken the rule?” I asked.

“Yes, two. About twenty years ago, a princess from Austria came riding here with her officers. When she heard that women could not come in, she was very angry and said that she must see the head monk. Her officers called the head monk to her, and he told her, ‘It is not our rule, it is the rule of Saint Saba, a thousand years ago. If you wish, we will put a table with the best that we have, in the shade of the tower for you.’ She said, ‘All right’; but after he was gone she kept thinking about it like a woman does and became even angrier than before and stamped her foot and struck her boot with her riding whip. Then she said to her officers, ‘I am going in.’ They saluted and said, ‘We will do what you tell us; but we do not wish to harm these monks.’ ‘You go ahead,’ she said, ‘I will follow.’

“They started in, but when they came a little way she began shaking all over from being so angry before. Then she went back to where the table was and overturned it and said, ‘We will not stop here at all; we will go back to Jerusalem.’ So she rode away with her officers.”



The sunlit tower beyond the outer wall of the monastery of St. Saba in the Judaeian wilderness is reserved for visitors of the gentler and (according to Brother Arcadios) the more dangerous sex.

He stopped and looked at Brother Arcadios for confirmation. The latter puffed out his cheeks, stuck out his lower lip in the drollest way imaginable, and with wide open eyes nodded up and down as much as to say, "Terrible behavior, that! But after all—what could you expect?"

"Who was the second lady?"

"Oh, *she* was a Russian. She came with some men and was dressed just like a man. The gatekeeper was pretty old and was not used to such things. He thought she was a man too and let her in with the rest. But before she did anything, the chief monk saw her and made them all get out. Then they got on their horses to go away—but what do you think? Her horse stood up on its hind legs and she fell off and broke her hand. You see," he added simply, "it is better for ladies to stay in the tower."

There were some Greek magazines on the table, one of which, after the American manner, bore the portrait of a famous beauty on the cover.

"Brother Arcadios," I said to the other monk, "here is a lady! You know very well that she ought to be in the tower."

Brother Arcadios chuckled a prodigious chuckle. "*Oh, this wife no talking,*" he said.

5

Every day those kindly old fellows visited with me for hours. I could not even get them to take the naps they should have had in the afternoon. The nightly services, beginning at midnight and ending at daybreak, were attended by all the monks in the monastery. Arcadios, who had a rich, beautiful voice, would take an important part in the ceremonies at night and then, when morning came, would minister to my wants with almost incredible good nature. At meal time he brought such viands as rice soup made with sour milk, black bread, fried eggs swimming in olive oil, cheese, wine with an aromatic bouquet from the vineyards of the monastery, and magnificent *café à la Turca*. Then, fairly bursting with suppressed conversation, he would sit down beside me while I ate.

"I in America once."

"*What!*"

"Yes—I in America. Six month. Before I be monk, my name, Athanasias. In America, I don't say Athanasias. I say Athos for easy.

“In America I go to school two hour each night, and man teach me *ah, e, i, ou, woo*—like this. No spik one word Englees. Always *ah, e, i, ou, woo*. After twent’ days, I quit. Man meet me one day in street and say, ‘Athos, why you no come school?’

“I say” (and here he wrinkled up his face into the expression of a Greek tragic mask), ‘Oh, must work too hard in shop.’ Then man say, ‘Too bad, Athos, you good man in school.’ ”

Arcadios leaned over and gave me a friendly nudge. “You know why I not go school?” he whispered.

“No—why not?”

“Too mooch *ah, e, i, ou, WOO!*”

6

While I sat at dinner with my two companions on the night before my departure from the monastery, the abbot came in accompanied by another whitebearded old monk who had been in the place for forty years. The latter said very little, but sat leaning on his long cane and looking about very keenly, first at one, then at another of us. The abbot remarked that they had not been able to do much in the

way of comfort, but that he hoped I had been content. A color sketch which I had made of the monastery was still unpacked so that it might dry until the last minute. Brother Nikéforos explained it to the abbot, holding it a few inches from the venerable nose and going over it as though it were a railroad map. I received the peculiar impression that as long as the details were clear it made no difference at all whether the drawing were right side up or not! "This is the tower outside the wall; this is the window in it. This is the back of the church; this is Brother Archimano-vite's room . . ." I could follow his Greek by his finger. He went over the thing like an expert in the Geographical Survey. Then, after wishing me a pleasant journey, the older monks said good-by, and left me alone with Nikéforos and Arcadios.

During the days at the monastery I had been considering the possibility of walking across the Judæan Wilderness to the Dead Sea and then to the Jordan and to Jericho. That reflection had been silent, for I felt sure that my two friends, out of the kindness of their hearts, would try to veto the project. I had come to the conclusion that if it were to

be done in one continuous journey, it would be necessary to start from Mar Saba at night. For the most part, that would work out very well. The donkey-boy whom Mohammed Jamel had sent from Jerusalem expected to start back at two in the morning. It would be easy enough, after I left the monastery, to send him on to the city and start out across the wilderness alone.

But I needed a water bottle. The land around the Dead Sea is the lowest not covered by water on the earth's surface—twelve hundred feet below sea level. I knew the heat was intense. If something unforeseen should occur in the wilderness, I might need a water bottle very badly. I resolved to tell the two monks my plan.

At first they were quite as shocked as Mohammed Jamel had been and Saliba at the hotel. I did not know my way across the wilderness. The Arabs were very bad. They would take my money, my clothes, my shoes. "They will leave you only your pants," said Nikéforos with great earnestness. We argued for some time. At last I took out all the money that I had about me—two English pounds and a few piastres.

“One of these pounds goes to the donkey-boy to-morrow morning,” I said. “The other is all I shall have in my pocket. This is an old suit of clothes. Look at my shoes. You can see for yourselves that they are beginning to wear through. What if they do take my clothes?”

They sat quite still a moment looking at each other. Then their eyes lit up, and would you believe it, those two bearded old fellows entered into the plan like a couple of schoolboys! I told them I needed a water bottle. “Anything that we have is yours,” they said, and Arcadios hurried away to fetch one. There was no cork. Nikéforos ingeniously cut one from a large spool and covered it with cloth. “You learn to do things when you travel,” he said. (I had a strong suspicion that he wished he were traveling too.) Together they brought a lot of bread and some eggs and some chunks of *salami*. “I never eat him,” said Arcadios, referring to the last, “but sometime Italian monk come here. He eat *salami* too mooch.”

They helped me sling the earthen water-flask with a strip of cloth and then looked at the equipment which I had spread out—matches, a pocket flashlight, a few dates, the

food they had given me, a notebook, fountain pen, cigarettes, and a small volume called "Arabic Self-taught."

"Aren't you going to take a bag?" they asked. But I said no, that the idea was to travel as lightly as possible. When I once got out of the wilderness onto the plain of the Dead Sea, I would not want the added weight of a bag. Then, when there was nothing more to do or say, they bade me a hearty good night.

7

It was dark when I awoke. From the church off of the courtyard below came the voice of Arcadios, singing. It faltered a little, and the colorless voices of the others blended with it in the response like voices in a dream. By that sign the day was still far off, for I had noticed that toward dawn the song always grew stronger and more hopeful with a gentle and touching confidence.

Presently, when I was dressed and the baggage ready, Nikéforos and Arcadios came out of the church and up the stairs with a lantern to see me off. The donkey-boy, sleeping with some Arabs outside the walls, was not yet up. No matter. Arcadios would pay him for me

and send him on his way. So the gatekeeper swung open the small iron door; we said good-by, and I went down the side of the gorge. Nikéforos accompanied me for a little way, not sorry perhaps to be outside the walls for a few moments. Strange—that a man who had been all over the world should find his resting place in that bit of gorge without even a glimpse of the horizon.

“I wish I were going with you,” he said with a sigh. “Of course, I would want to come back. . . .”

JOHN SPEAKS

*I take my sacrament upon the hills
Beneath a star-swept wilderness of sky,
Where silence, and the night wind passing by
Bring to my soul such brooding peace as fill
All vast and open spaces of the night.*

*So worshiping, with calm, unbended head,
I feel all man-made humbleness and pride
Slip like an outworn garment to my side,
And I stand forth as in a radiant light
Naked and unashamed—and hallowèd.*

THE WILDERNESS

CHAPTER XIV

1

I DID not follow the Wadi-en-Nar, which forms the deep canyon at the monastery. It runs nearly southeast. If I were to strike the north end of the Dead Sea, I must travel to the northeast. I climbed a high crag at a bend in the canyon and looked at my watch. It was three. A quarter moon had risen from the south and was faintly shining over the dark slopes and black valleys before me. Not a sound. No sign of life of any kind—wilder-ness. I followed the almost imperceptible trail down into the valley beyond.

An hour later the Great Dipper rose to the left above the hills. Now and then the north star riding very low came into sight for an instant between two crests. I stopped a moment to drink from the earthen bottle. The spool came out with a swish of curling water and a deep, resonant *pong*. It was just such a pleasant response as a well makes to the lowering of the bucket. In spite of having rested against my side, the bottle and its contents

were several degrees cooler than the air, for it was made of porous earth which allowed the water to seep through and cool it off. Quite content, I went on.

2

Before anyone actually writes a book he is continually thinking out ideas that will convey as well as possible what he expects to say; but when it comes to the writing, it often works out quite differently. For example, I knew that Jesus of Nazareth, and John the Baptist, too, had come into this wilderness, and I had thought, when I saw it from the crest of the monastery, that I would say how pitiless it would be at night for anyone who was battling with a great problem.

But now I stopped and looked at the stars and at the night spreading like a spangled tapestry over the hills and valleys. As I stood there a desert lark far off to the left, knowing better than I that dawn was near, began his morning hymn. Then I thought to myself: "No, I cannot say that it is pitiless. For here in the wilderness, in all the surrounding depths of night with the stars attendant, the Nazarene Carpenter must have been very near the bor-

derland of that vast, impenetrable region which some men have called Elysium, and some Nirvana, and some Paradise, but which all men know for the dwelling-place of the Soul."

Light in the east! Not color—just the merest shifting of night's curtain. Now the stars ahead were growing fainter. As I crossed a shallow valley in the middle of a wide plain there came a damp, dank smell like that of a subterranean vault—the cool, enfolding night vapors of the Dead Sea. And now, on the eastern horizon, glowed a spatter of light like molten iron splashing up before the cupola of a great smelting furnace. I looked back. The hills of the wilderness already had the sun-color on them—cadmium orange mixed with burnt sienna, and overlaid with flakes of light crimson. Then the sun rose, smoking, and peered keenly at me under the edge of my sun helmet.

3

The plain lay encircled by mountains. Its soil, dry and hard, was soil, however, and free from rock. Brown, crackling plants covered

it—wild esparto grass and sage, and the skeletons of daisies. But if the fresh water of irrigation should come into that plain (as some day it is bound to come), then Wilderness there were assuredly Paradise enow.

At the foot of the hills which separate the table-land from the sea, the faint path I had been following divided. One branch led down a *wadi*. The other carried more to the north over a high hill. I chose the latter. From its crest the mountains stretched away to the north and south in a mass of reddish-ochre wrinkles, sharp as the surface of a tin relief map. Northeast, in front of a flat-topped hill, a small cluster of domes flashed in the sun. Was it Nebi Musa, the Tomb of Moses, to which the Hebron Arabs had come a month earlier? I had read somewhere that when Nebi Musa comes in sight along any road, devout Moslem travelers heap up small pyramids of rock. When I next saw the white domes between the hills there, indeed, were a dozen or more small, reassuring piles of stone by the roadside!

Ten minutes later two more paths came straggling over the hill from Nebi Musa and joined the one I was traveling. This *entente*

cordiale shortly resulted in a sort of Palestine avenue consisting of four or five irregular, intermingling paths thickly strewn with bowlders. Then through a gap in the hills appeared another wide plain and beyond it, the Dead Sea.

Bahr Lut—the Sea of Lot the Arabs call it—has no outlet. It receives daily from its tributaries, particularly the Jordan, *six and a half million tons of water*. Yet the evaporation is so tremendous that from year to year there is hardly a perceptible change in its mean level. Rugged, desolate mountains and alkali plains surround it. Great pits of bitumen lie at its bottom and impregnate the bitter, noxious water. To the south is a range of rock salt hills fully seven miles long. The springs on its shore are sulphurous and sulphur lies in layers on its plains. Under sufficient volcanic or electric heat, the land would have potency for a terrific conflagration. It is quite understandable that no traces have been found of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Along the road a mile from the shore I came unexpectedly upon a twenty-foot stone basin hidden by the surrounding broom and weeds. Water was brimming over its edge. It is gen-

erally conceded that "if water looks good, smells good, and tastes good, it probably *is* good." This water was a little cloudy in appearance and a little alkaline in taste—but there was no unseemly fragrance at all. One point out of three then, with a good fighting chance for the other two. So I got down like the pleasant, peaceful men whom Joshua rejected and drank deep.

And here was the graveled shore of the Dead Sea. I had traveled four hours. Baedeker, I remembered, said that it would take riders on horseback five (!) so being a little ahead of time, I stopped long enough to wade out into the brine. Has anyone ever visited the Dead Sea without tasting it? As I raised the water to my lips, a drawing by an American cartoonist came to my mind. It showed a newly painted lamp-post labeled "Wet Paint" and a long queue of people—messenger boys, bank presidents, stenographers, chauffeurs, babies, tramps, Phi Beta Kappas—all lined up with their fingers in the air waiting to see whether the paint was really wet.

There has been a longer line than that at the Dead Sea.

The taste is much as it has been described by

Josephus and all the rest, with this exception—that it cannot be described at all. In spite of the excellent descriptions you may have read, you will put a little of the water into your mouth and say, “Oh, yes—rather like the Atlantic—perhaps a little stronger,” and just at that moment it will slide around under your tongue, and your eyes will open wide at the astonishing sting of it. But that is not strange after all. The water of Bahr Lut is *more than one fourth mineral*.

4

The sun had been hot on the hills at fifty-three. It was now eight—and twelve hundred feet below sea level. Still, I felt no particular desire to swim in the Dead Sea. There was another objective ahead. A flat plain splashed with alkali rolled away to the north, with chalk foothills and red mountains in the distance. Two roads ran across the plain, one northeast and one northwest. I took the northeast road. At the end of that road, I hoped, was the Jordan and a swim.

In Bethlehem, time and time again, the music of “*Stille Nacht, heilige Nacht*” had come to me. But now, instead of being in a

similar mood, I found myself merrily keeping time to

“The animals come by two and two,
One wide river to cross. . . .”

A little water chinked a pleasant accompaniment in the bottom of the clay water bottle. If there had been a little more water, it would perhaps have chinked a little more pleasantly, for I had not filled it at the alkali spring. There was no use poisoning the bottle until I was confident that I had not poisoned myself. At last, beyond a tangle of tamarisks and willows, appeared the Jordan; and at that moment I received a shock.

The Jordan, the Great Defender, the “one, wide river,” was no wider than a mill-stream! The farther bank was literally only a stone’s throw away. The river twisted along the plain in intricate curves hidden for the most part in dense underbrush. Its banks were lined with broken roots and canes and willow branches caught there for a while on their journey to the Dead Sea.

A black boy in turban and *mishla* and a white dog were watching some goats at a place where the bank had been cleared for pilgrims.

The dog was surly and approached showing a full quota of glistening teeth, but he stopped to listen with prophetic ear to the whistle of my stick; and after weighing matters with care, he grudgingly retreated, pretending that it was only in obedience to a man's voice from the opposite bank.

5

With one eye on the dog, I doffed my clothes and went into the Jordan, carrying a two-pias-tre piece for the unseen owner of the voice on the farther shore. Perhaps if the current were strong, I might want to rest there for a while. The dweller on the opposite bank was a stocky, long-mustached man of Balkan type. He welcomed me in an unknown tongue, accepted the coin only on protest, and immediately began to prepare coffee. I looked around. It was as though I had suddenly entered the *ménage* of Robinson Crusoe. My host's boat containing a heavy rifle and a bandolier of cartridges lay moored to the bank. The river swept about in a loop, giving the half acre of ground he occupied the appearance of a small, wooded island. His chairs, tables and benches had all been cut from the materials at hand.

The stove, about which a dog and two cats were playing, was built of stones. Under the shelter of osier mats a rustic table overlooked the river, while above it, like a great bird's nest up among the trees, was his house. Its floor of logs (with turf between to give a flat upper surface) rested on the forked trunks of growing trees, some twelve feet above the ground. And the house itself, which was made of intertwined twigs and clay, stood half-hidden among the branches, while a shelter of reeds over it doubtless kept out the rain. The original Robinson would heartily have approved of the means of entrance and egress. One simply went up a ladder and (if necessary) pulled it up after him. Such pots and pans as hung in the shed below might very well have been foraged from a nearby wreck. And the name of the black boy with the goats was—unfortunately—not Friday but Abraham.

A huge slice of bread, buttered on both sides and sprinkled with sugar, accompanied the coffee. My provider and I had no common language, but I gathered that he was a Greek from the island of Crete—*Craytah*, he called it—and that he was stationed there to protect

pilgrims who came to the place of baptism against the Arabs east of the river. When I said that I was an American, he shook hands with himself quite energetically and said, "Amerika-Grek! Bona bona!" thereby implying that the diplomatic relations of the two countries were for the moment at par.

Presently I went to the other bank and returned with some cigarettes, which he accepted with pleasure; and later I brought the earthenware bottle to be supplied from his petroleum tin. There are many stories of the river's dangerous current at the place of the pilgrims, and of dragomans who will permit their patrons to bathe only when fastened to the end of a line which will by no means allow them to cross. But for any one who is brazen enough to say that he can swim I do not think that the Jordan in May or later is a matter for an Arab dragoman and twenty feet of rope.

CHAPTER XV

1

THE word *ma* is unique. It is the first primitive syllable used by the young of the human species to call their mother, and it is used for that purpose almost everywhere. In Hendrik Van Loon's delightful history of mankind there is a chart which shows how the Aryan stem *ma* has sent out its branches to make actual words for mother in the various Aryan tongues. Even Sanskrit is represented by the word *mata*. But there is one rather significant exception to that general rule. In Arabic, the language of the desert, the word *ma* does not mean mother. It means *water*.

The very religion of the desert is keyed to that liquid note. During all the days of a Moslem's life, rite after rite is performed beside some solitary spring or well. When he dies it is believed that the devils stand by his side with a sparkling jorum which he is only too eager to exchange for the wayfarer's soul. On the final Day of Judgment the spiritually beautiful will rest in the shade of Allah's

throne, while the damned will suffer terribly from the heat of the approaching sun.

I defy any man to walk across the plain from the Jordan to Jericho at midday without having a better understanding of the religion of Mohammed. In comparison with a self-respecting desert, that plain would hardly be visible, but for demonstration purposes it is quite large enough. Even the desert people themselves were not immune to its terrific heat. The faces of one or two Arabs I passed were wrinkled into grinning, slit-eyed masks. The heat burned up through my soles and down through my helmet and sideways by refraction and radiation through my clothes. Gradually my eyes became no longer eyes but smoldering coals. I poured water on my head, as Don Marquis once did. That made me think of a confrere of Don Marquis who has very graphically described a torrid night on a New York-Philadelphia Express. I too had traveled by night from New York to Philadelphia. But now I thought of such nights as that with the longing which a strictly fresh halibut, frying in a New York grill, must feel when he looks back at his long cool months of storage under the Brooklyn Bridge. Two, three, four miles

went by. I decoyed myself onward by thinking about the history of the region through which I was passing:

Time was when the plain of Jericho was a Paradise. It abounded in palms, balsams, and great orchards. Subtropical foliage covered the outlying country estates, which were irrigated by a splendid system of aqueducts from the western hills. When Mark Antony, after leaving Cleopatra for Octavia, wished again to mend matters with the Egyptian queen, he gave her the plain of Jericho. But if Jericho had been *then* as it is to-day—another mile.

There have been three Jerichos—Joshua's, Herod's, and the present squalid village with two or three hotels and a few lazy-looking men and women with tattooed faces standing about. The ruins of the two older cities are not far from the ruin which is to-day's. Some walls—perhaps of Joshua's time—have been excavated, and some fragments which are believed to be the remains of Herod's city are to be seen. West of the Jerichos rise the first of those parallel mountain ranges which lie between the valley and the maritime plain. Looking forward a mile or two beyond the town, I

could see the place where the road entered the mountains on its way to Jerusalem.

It wound a short distance up into the hills and disappeared among beetling crags. I looked at my watch. It was three in the afternoon. Then, very slowly, the walls of Jericho crept forward to the place where I stood grinding out an endless treadmill of fiery road.

2

Two hours later, refreshed by a rest and dinner in the Hotel Gilgal, I started for Jerusalem. That city lay sixteen miles away. Figuring on a very modest rate of speed, I hoped to arrive there well before midnight. Down the road toward Jericho, in clouds of golden dust, came the herds from their mountain pastures, followed singly or in groups by the *fellahin* driving their small donkeys before them. Then a knot on horseback rode past giving their rough greeting, and then after them ambled a number of camels loaded with hay. The road zigzagged into the pass beside a deep gorge. High along the nearer side of the gorge and conforming to its irregularities ran a shelflike channel of stone through which a swift, copious stream of water was pouring.

As I went forward a strong wind began to blow down the pass, carrying with it thick clouds of limestone dust.

Presently around a corner came a solitary soldier on horseback. As we approached each other he drew his horse over to my side of the road.

“Where you go?”

“To Jerusalem.”

“Jerusalem? Come back Jericho. Night time, mountains no good!”

“I wish to get to Jerusalem just as soon as possible,” I said.

“No good. Beduins in mountains. Make like this—.” He made a quick, graphic motion of cutting his throat.

“Not so bad as that,” I said, laughing in a bold, fearless manner, like one of J. Farnol’s heroes. But when I went on, he shook his head mournfully, as though to say, “Yállah, how sad to think that this courageous gentleman will shortly be lying in one of the desolate *wadies*, with the hyenas cracking his marrow-bones!” Then he turned his horse and went slowly down the pass.

To be quite frank, the interview had not added to the native gayety of the occasion. It

was on this road that a benevolent Samaritan had once picked up a badly battered traveler who had fallen among thieves, and the reputation of the place is no more savory now than it was then. Besides, in the next mile, I noticed no less than three empty cartridge shells lying in the dust. They were not the sort of cartridges one uses in duck hunting.

Then the wind began in earnest, hurling white clouds of dust down the pass and obliterating everything for moments at a time. Between two dust clouds I looked up the road ahead. There, at a curve two hundred paces away, sitting immovable on their horses, were three armed Beduins. Their rifles lay ready across their saddles. They had chosen a position where, except for an occasional angle, they could see the road for miles on either side. As I looked, one dismounted and stood waiting beside his horse. They were watching me intently.

The road wound between some great rocks, so that I was out of sight for perhaps a minute. I looked about. A sheep path led straight to the summit of a high hill. There was the merest chance that from its crest I might be seen by the last guard who was by

that time far down the pass toward Jericho. . . No! I had started the thing, and I would finish it. This was the very situation that my two old monks and I had had such a good time about at the monastery! "They will take your money, your shoes, your clothes." Yes indeed; very funny. But some how or other, just now, not so funny!

Then I marched my legs up the pass. *Beduins*. There was no doubt about it! Two wore the Arab headdress—the *kaffiyeh*—held on by the customary horsehair rings, beneath which appeared gaunt, powerful faces with drooping mustaches and keen, hard eyes. The third wore a torn jersey and the round skull-cap of the *fellahin*. I noted that no two of their saddles were alike. I noted that their costumes were all different. I noted—

"Where are you going?" This in Arabic—but I understood it clearly enough.

"To Jerusalem," I said.

"*La!*" they replied.

"*Must go to Jerusalem,*" I announced, with emphasis.

"*La!*" they answered, grimly.

And just then, on the collar of the foremost, I saw a brass badge bearing the number 145.

"*Police?*" I hazarded in a wild, improbable guess.

"*Police,*" they answered, promptly.

3

Perhaps I should have been annoyed at them for interrupting my journey. I do not mind saying that I was not. Well, it had been a good thrill. I prepared to say good night and be on my way.

"*La!*" They got in front of me and kept making remarks about *clifti*. Somehow they conveyed the information that I could not go on to Jerusalem because the *clifti* were very dangerous. Since *cavey* meant cave at Mar Saba, I inferred that *clifti* meant cliff on the Jericho road. So I took out my pocket flashlight and showed them that there was little or no danger of my falling off of the highway. However, they appeared to be far from convinced and made it apparent by abrupt gestures that I was to accompany them. The fellow in the skullcap remounted and rode a few yards ahead; the others dropped behind; and in this formation, we traveled up the road.

At the highest point of the pass, the way ran over a great, wind-swept hill. Here my

captors motioned me to turn to the right. For a hundred yards we struggled up the rocky hillside. On its crest stood two tents, straining at their guy-ropes as though they would be off at any minute. Two dogs, savage as small lions, bristled at me and sent their clamor down the wind. Then the nearest tent opened, and an Arab sergeant of mounted police came out, followed by two or three privates in uniform. One of the latter spoke the fewest words of English that it is possible to imagine.

"Where kam?" he asked. In the lee of the tent, I made a rough map of my journey—Mar Saba, the Dead Sea, the Jordan, Jericho, and showed them by my watch when I had started.

"Engleesi?" they asked.

"Americani," I said, upon which they looked at each other and grunted "Americani" very significantly a few times in a tone which clearly implied that almost anything peculiar might be expected. We went into the tent and sat down. I told them by pantomime about the guard who lived in a tree across the Jordan, whereupon they nodded vociferously and said, "*Rumi, rumi!*" which means, in Arabic, a

Greek. Cigarettes were handed around. We were getting on excellently. I opened my "Arabic Self-taught" and asked in a genial manner, "Who is the proprietor of this hotel?" Unfortunately, they thought that I meant it literally and went through the kindly though terrific process of explaining that it was not a hotel but a police outpost!

"*Mangeria!*" Beside the candle in the middle of the table they placed a great bowl of smoking rice and beside it a bowl of stew and a pile of native bread. With riotous hospitality they made place for me, thrusting a thin loaf of bread into one hand and showing me how to roll a ball of rice with the other. I had dined very well at Jericho; but, under the circumstances, I accepted their bounty as well as I could, in the meantime devoting myself to the word *clifti*. Soon it was conveyed on our fragile wire of communication that a *clifti* is not a cliff but a robber! In my enthusiasm at finally getting the meaning, I said, "Oh! A Beduin!"—a remark which was followed by a rather painful silence, all the gentlemen present excepting myself being Beduins.

In "Arabic Self-taught" there were several pages under the heading "Meals." Probably

there would be some pleasant generalities there. No such luck, however. The list grew more hopeless as I read. *Please pass the tea and cakes. . . . May I offer you some fish? . . . Will you pass the mustard? . . . Show me the wine list. . . . Is this water filtered?*

We talked about localities. Four of them, I found, came from Hebron. Then conversation lagged. When coffee was finished, I followed the sergeant—*haj*, they called him—to the other tent.

4

The bed, the very best the "hotel" afforded, was a slightly raised mound covered with a blanket. It seemed to be composed of horse equipment—bits, neck straps, spurs, saddles, boots, curb-chains, and stirrups. The *haj*, after designating it as mine, took out a handful of dry Arabian tobacco, poured water on it, kneaded it together, and packed it into his *hubble-bubble*. After putting a hot coal on top of it, he sat quietly smoking while the interpreter told me with his hands, feet, and torso that American moving pictures were very good. Again the conversation waned. I re-

moved my shoes and went to bed. Tired as I was, that mound of saddles and stirrups would have seemed a king's couch—but alas, it was already occupied. *Fleas!* Swift, indefatigable, malignant—the only denizens of the country who have never come under the sway of the invader. Did the Crusaders have—*this?* For a moment I forgot my own sorrows in theirs. If half a dozen resolute Mohammedan fleas ever got inside their Christian armor . . . ! And then I forgot their sorrows in mine.

This is how bad they were: Toward the small hours of the morning I rose and put on my shoes again, so that at least one section of punctured epidermis should be covered by a bulwark of leather.

At daybreak I was awakened from fitful slumber by the voice of the interpreter, who lay near me, sleepily requesting the judgment of Allah on a little black goat that was nibbling his mustache. The *haj* had already risen and was kneeling in the center of the tent, facing Mecca and washing in clear water from the spout of an earthen jar. As he washed, he mumbled swift prayers in a husky, guttural voice.

I rose on creaking bones, which in turn

were clothed in the sinews of an aged man; but after I had washed, and been warmed by the sun, youth rekindled sufficiently to permit me to intimate to the *haj* that I was ready to depart. He made suggestions about *mangeria* again, but I thanked him quickly and kindly, and went down the road to Jerusalem with the sun at my back.

THE TOWN

CHAPTER XVI

I

HILWAY AUDEH was standing inside the Jaffa Gate, holding a basket of hand-made lace which she offered to passers by. She was a woman of about forty, not of the Palestine type so much as the Syrian—with dark hair sweeping down either side of her forehead, level brows, tranquil eyes, and a slightly aquiline nose. The face was a little worn-looking. The eyes pleaded silently. Once upon a time, on a journey to China, I had bought a rather large number of lace affairs; but on returning home I found that no honor had accrued thereby. I knew of my own knowledge that the design and workmanship were good. But *something* was wrong. “Oh, yes, it is beautiful hand-made lace,” they said. “Beautiful. . .” At last, some one more compassionate than the rest told me that just that sort of thing had not been worn for seven or eight years. “But it is beautifully made . . .” So I passed Hilway Audeh by.

But coming into the hotel a day or two later, I found her talking to Saliba Abraham

Said. They were old friends. Then, "Will you not buy a little lace?" Well... In the buying, it transpired that Hilway, a widow with several children, lived in Nazareth and that she expected to return to Galilee the next day. That interested me, for I too intended to go to Nazareth very soon. I inquired where a room could be found.

"Why do you not come to my house?" she asked, to my surprise. It was arranged. A few days later I sent off a letter to her, and the following morning I left for Nazareth.

2

The automobile would hardly have been recognized as one of the usual variety. Its tin sides were terribly battered. Its fenders no longer fended. The upholstery indeed had completely disappeared. In place of the latter, two small Turkish rugs hung over the back seat. But the tires were brand new; and when the driver turned his engine over, it answered at once with a quick chug-chug and then with a steady, powerful whirr from its four efficient cylinders. "Good engine," I said, taking a chance on its owner's English.

"Yes," he answered, "it runs *all right*."



The Citadel or Tower of David is a great mass of mediaeval masonry beside the Jaffa Gate. It is still separated from its watch tower by a deep moat. At night its ancient walls rise up starkly—lit by the electric arc-light of the neighboring gendarmerie.

When something happens to it, I don't take it somewhere—I fix it myself.”

There were two other passengers for the north, a venerable, white-whiskered Jew next to the driver and a young Jewish lady separated from myself by a large trunk covered with flowered wall-paper. The patriarch seemed to be using that particular trip of that particular Ford to move his home. Two wicker chairs, much the worse for wear, rose abaft the forward mudguards, functioning like the whiskers of a cat. If they could go through an opening without being scraped off, whatever was behind them could follow without any trouble at all. Large baskets and boxes filled every available foot of the tonneau; mops, brooms, and some of the lighter garden implements were strapped along the top. Its appearance recalled the *Mayflower*. The driver and the venerable one beside him kept up a steady flow of conversation in Arabic. The young lady at the other side of the paper-covered trunk spoke only Arabic and Hebrew. I gave my attention to the landscape.

From the beginning of these notes, I have tried as much as possible to avoid saying, “This

place is so-and-so," and "Here, such-and-such an event happened." And yet—that hill over there is certainly Gerizim, the sacred mountain of Abraham and Joseph and Jacob and Joshua. And all the district about us is called Samaria after a city of that name; and here, in a little church to the right of the road, is a well where a poor woman of Samaria once saw life in an entirely new way through talking a little while with a Stranger from Nazareth.

As we rested at Nablus, the ancient Shechem, a song came from the old Turkish barracks across the road, with a strange, far-away lilt which made even the natives stand and listen. The British have found the citizens of Shechem a little restive. Indian lance cavalry—Sikhs—occupy the barracks, and the song was not of Galilee but of the Punjab. Whenever we stopped, the driver stopped his engine too, in order, I felt sure, to hear its quick, pleasant response at the first jerk of the crank. As he climbed in over the household property he would cast a shy, solemn glance at me, and I would nod in appreciation, whereupon he would smile delightedly. Ours was a deep and secret freemasonry. He

had a well-tuned engine, and he knew that I knew he had "tuned it up" himself.

I looked at his coat. As far as color went, it might have been a British or American or Serbian uniform, or even one from the army of King Feisal in Mesopotamia. But the cut of it seemed to be that of the "regular issue O. D. blouse" of the Americans. It resembled the regular issue blouse even more in that it did not fit him quite. And when he turned around there were the familiar bronze buttons bearing the eagles with the stars above them.

"That coat?" he replied to my question. "That's from my ole country! My brother sent it to me. He was in France in the war. Myself, I lived near Detroit ten years." (Detroit! No wonder the engine sang!)

Then the town of Samaria went by, and the village of Jeneen (the Engannin of Joshua) with a stream of fresh water running beside it. "Engannin" means "the garden's spring," said my guide book. "Some authorities state that because of its excellent water supply this is also Beth-gannin, meaning 'garden house,' and that it was by this road that Ahaziah came fleeing from Jehu, the son of Jehoshaphat. Other authorities state—"

Ah yes—and I thought, “There they go, stating and stating that it was ‘*by this road*’—not that it was possibly or probably by this road, but that it was *by this road*.” Others are just as positive that it was *not* by this road. And the whole thing happened nearly three thousand years ago in the midst of a muddy plain! Which is right? Certainly *I* do not know. But sometimes, the world seems to be nothing but a mass of man-made *statements*, with truth fighting for breath at the bottom of the heap.

And now we were passing Jezreel, where the watchman in the tower saw Jehu driving furiously. But as I looked forward toward the hills ahead I realized that I was not particularly moved by knowing where Jehu may have driven or who may have watched him. Or where Joab and Abishai avenged themselves for the death of Asahel. Sullen, savage blood-feuds these, dominated by a god before whom men bowed down like cravens. One could almost hear the thunder of the tom-toms and see the smoke curling up from the altars of a deity so primitive that he demanded a sacrifice of blood.

Then all these thoughts passed by like the

shadows of small clouds before the sun. On a curved hollow of the hillside ahead of us lay a white-walled cheerful-looking town. The Arabs call that town En-Nazira.

But for a long time, in the West, we have called it Nazareth.

3

Hilway Audeh's house lay halfway up the hill in a network of cactus hedges, small houses and fruit trees. A lane below it ran parallel with the hillside. In a diminutive garden with a retaining wall to make it level a *mish-mish* tree was in bloom, and bees from a cylindrical clay hive were busy among the flowers. Hilway saw me leave the automobile at Mary's Well and came hurrying down the hill to meet me. She was a little flurried, for she had not received my letter. She hoped I would excuse the fact that the house was not straightened up.

Her oldest daughter, a girl of eighteen, met us at the door. The front room was not in order; so, after putting the baggage inside, I went out and looked at the *mish-mish* tree in the little yard and at the bees clustering by hundreds on the clay cylinders and at the valley

and the roofs of Nazareth below. Then Hilway called me in and brought some native food, apologizing all the time that there was no European food in the house. I protested that I liked the native kind; but she said, "No, you must feel just as though this were your home." So I ate the native bread and cheese and a few *mish-mish*; and then, when the sun's heat had lessened, I climbed to the open hilltop above the town.

“ONCE, IN NAZARETH. . .”

*Over the slopes of Esdraelon
Down through the lanes of Nazareth,
Dusty and hot and out of breath,
Ran Mary's little Son.*

*“Where have you been, my bonnie one?
Where have you wandered all day long,
Mother has missed your cheery song. . .”*

*“Mother, I saw a caravan—
Fifty camels and camel-men,
Slaves there were and soldiers ten—
Camped in the shade when the heat began.*

*“The camels stood in the cool of the hill,
But I saw the slaves with bleeding feet
Gathering grass in the midday heat—
One of them fell and lay quite still.”*

*“What did you do, my little one?”
“Mother, I ran as fast as I could
Bringing a branch of oliverwood
To shade him from the sun.*

*“Mother, I bathed his tired brow
And three times filled his empty cup
And smoothed his hair and helped him up
As you have taught me how.*

*“Mother, when I grow up some more
Then I’ll be king of Galilee,
But never a slave-man will you see—
· · · · ·
Mother—what are you crying for?”*

CHAPTER XVII

1

Do you know—very probably you do—that the Mediterranean is plainly visible from the hilltop above Nazareth? When I climbed its crest and faced the fresh breeze blowing from the east and saw the blue water flashing beyond Mount Carmel, there came a warm surge of the pulses and a quick, deep sense of affirmation. “Of course!” I found myself saying. “I should have known it!” In a breath I seemed to understand a thousand things which I had not comprehended before. What growing lad could watch that distant, elusive strip of blue without speculating about the world which lay beyond? Day after day *he* must have climbed the curved crest of the hill to look at the sea. I do not think there is the slightest doubt about that. Nazareth, it is true, has been destroyed not less than three times since the Christian era began. The houses are of mud and soft rock. Very little of the original town could remain. But the Virgin’s Well, with its abundant stream of

water, is the only sizable spring within miles. The women and girls still fill their jars there morning and night. It lies directly at the foot of the hill, and from the top of that hill one sees twenty miles of the Mediterranean coast with the busy port of Haifa in the distance. It is as much a part of the world's girdle as the farthest reaches of the Pacific.

I never climbed the hill but that a strong breeze was blowing from the Mediterranean; and here, as sometimes in a church, there came to me the wish to be alone. It is difficult to understand why this spot is not covered with the mightiest church in Christendom. Or, rather, it would be difficult to understand, if one did not know that man has been busy all these years not so much with his Master's life as with his death. As it is, there is no cathedral in the world like this one. The great plain of Esdraelon is the nave, Mount Tabor is the pulpit, Mount Hermon, to the northeast, the white-haired priest. The dome of the sky rises overhead, and the sea is a window of rich, unduplicable glass. And for music there is the wind—the first whispered notes of a mighty organ.

Even now, in places far away from Galilee

—and seemingly for no reason at all—the memory of that hilltop comes rushing back. And then for an instant comes a sense of seeing true. It is as though there came a swift, broad view of an astonishing canvas that man has been painting through the ages. It is so vast, that canvas, and its values are so breathtaking that we cannot make much out of it if we look at one place too closely. That was my trouble in the last chapter, when I passed Jezreel where the watchman saw Jehu driving so furiously. I was looking too closely at one particular spot.

Sometimes the wider view lasts only an instant. In that time we must try to see as much of the painting as we can.

2

We are far from being sure of what took place on these hillsides during the first thirty years of Christ's life. We have come to think of that period as passing with great serenity, but that is difficult to know. Rome, at least, was not having an easy time in the vicinity. Beyond the range of hills to the north, the Parthians had already defeated the legions several times. Even in the small province of

Galilee, thirty miles wide by forty long, there had been at least one serious rebellion. It took two trained legions to crush it; and, as a result, more than a thousand men were crucified. Whole towns were taken into slavery. The spirit of revolt was abroad; men and women were searching for something. That something was spiritual help. Democracy too, newly aroused, was aiding the search. (There appears to be an almost uncanny parallelism between local conditions then and world conditions to-day.)

Two thousand years earlier, when Rameses II made slaves of a group of nomadic tribes east of the Delta and forced them to make mud bricks, he fused democracy at white heat into the Semitic character. The Hebrew race was inoculated in its very fiber with the cravings for a freedom of spirit, the like of which Greece, even at her best period, probably did not know. The weight of legions has never been able to conquer—and never will be able to conquer—the highest message of the prophets of Israel.

So—in the early years of *his* life at Nazareth, when the land was ridden by an ecclesiastical hierarchy and by the Herods and the

mandate of Rome—the spirit of the prophets smoldered in Palestine with a fierce and not always hidden flame. From his hilltop he was not blind to these things. Galilee was the very center of the conflagration. Here the intense nationalism of the Jews strove with the imperialism of Rome. Socially it was to the world what the Bloody Angle was to the Union in July, 1863. It was Le Mares Farm on the Paris-Metz Road in June, 1918.

3

What was actually to be seen from that hilltop in Galilee? To the west, beyond the low, crouching bulk of Mount Carmel, lay the Mediterranean, with the grain fleets of Egypt and the Phœnician merchantmen from Tyre and the mother-city, Sidon, plying up and down its coasts. Eastward stretched the desert, the broad highway of the caravans—slow pulse of the mysterious East. To the north ran the busy highway from Damascus to the Sea. Southward lay the great Roman road from Acre to the Jordan, teeming with the traffic of Transjordan and the Galilee basin. Vast routes of trade these, ready to bear a message of revolt or horror or hope to

the ends of the world. There had been sufficient messages of horror. . . .

In the midst of all this turmoil came the voice of a young seer by the name of John, at first clear and strong, out of the wilderness, then a little wearily as the need for his message waned and the Herodian corruptions drew too near to his vision. Close upon that followed the sequel—as Aubrey Beardsley, the English artist, has so well drawn it—a terrible, misshapen arm rising starkly out of a black pit, bearing a salver on which lies the prophet's head.

4

Then came the Christ.

The message he brought was—*Deliverance*. The freeing of man's spirit. The liberating of the individual from his bonds. The unfettering of the world's slaves.

We have by no means allowed all those fetters to be struck off. Sometimes when we look at the nearer parts of the great painting, there seem to be more fetters than ever before. That, I think, is not seeing true. By all that we know of man and his history, the direction is unmistakably upward. Man is moving slowly and painfully, but he is moving upward and on.

The hill above Nazareth? We shall never actually know what it has done for us. We only know that He who had looked so often from its summit said, "Go ye into *all the world* . . ." The Jewish world stood aghast. Then he told them to love their neighbors—the Gentiles even—as themselves. That was beyond the pale! Yet with those poignant words that seemed so utterly visionary and impractical he broke down the old barriers and with his vision illuminated the world's vision. Man's unconscious dream was changed from a dream into the reality of a magnificent, enheartening struggle, a struggle toward an ideal too high, thank God, even for the best of men to reach.

These things would come very clearly to any man on the hillside above Nazareth.

THE TOILERS

*Strong, with the strength of earth beneath their
tread,*

*Slow, as the marching stars they gaze
upon—*

*Squadrons of living Men and living Dead—
The legions of eternity press on.*

*As one they come. “And who in yonder van
Illumines all the path that men may see?”*

.

*“I think he is a fellow working-man—
A Carpenter, they say, from Galilee.”*

CHAPTER XVIII

1

NAZARETH is not a typical Palestine town. It is much too clean for that; almost as clean as Bethlehem. The exteriors of the houses are white-washed very frequently, and instead of gutters, stone-lined trenches a foot or two wide and a foot deep run down the center of the streets. Such a system has its advantages. There is only one place for things like cabbage leaves and vegetable parings, and the channels are cleaned daily. The dwellings in the town proper are crowded close together on the convex face of the hill; but on the outlying slopes, they cluster picturesquely among green cactus hedges and fig and olive trees.

There are not many sites that are known as sacred in Nazareth. A small chapel occupies the traditional place of Joseph's workshop. Another contains a flat-topped stone some six feet long which is said to have been used as a table by Christ and his disciples. There is a feeling of greater freedom about the Church of the Annunciation than in the heavy, ornate

interiors at Jerusalem. It is decorated with simple bands of blue on a white background of flat surfaces and arches, and on its walls are portraits of monks in the familiar brown homespun of the Franciscans.

Along the shallow valley beyond the town cactus hedges rear their spiked leaves twelve feet or more into the hot, still air. In the lanes between the hedges one seems almost to be treading a narrow path through a cactus jungle. Often huge plants are to be seen growing luxuriantly, with their roots clinging to the tops of low stone walls. To make such a defense it is only necessary to lay cactus leaves upon the uppermost layer of stones where they shortly take root themselves.

In the evenings when Hilway Audeh came home from her work, she would tell me about recent events in Nazareth. Its inhabitants were no more through talking about the Great War than people were in Liverpool, or Dresden, or Philadelphia. During the occupation of the town by Turkish troops, lace-making, Hilway said, was ended. So she locked the children in the house and went every day to the village of Seffurieh, a six-mile walk, for fruit and vegetables which she brought back

and sold to the Turkish troops. But later that was no longer possible, for the Germans regulated all the food supplies in Galilee. Then, night and morning, she went into the hills and gathered large bundles of faggots and weeds for fuel. These she sold for one piastre (five cents) a bundle. Frequently fever induced by poor food overcame her, and then she would lie down in the open fields and sleep until she could go on again.

Since the British mandate has been in effect, things have gone somewhat better for Hilway. Her oldest son is in the gendarmerie. At intervals she takes her lace to sell in Jerusalem.

“But is there no lace sold in Nazareth?” I asked.

“Not very much. You know why? It is because the travelers come by automobile and no longer stop for more than an hour at Nazareth. In the days before the war they would at least rest here over night, and perhaps they would buy some lace. But now they stay only for a short time, and then go quickly on to Tiberias.”

2

A burial service took place on the afternoon of the day before I left the little town. A

young Nazarene of eighteen or twenty, on gendarme duty in a neighboring village, had been killed by a horse. He was riding one of the mounts which the English had brought with them—a powerful, vicious stallion that already had one killing to his record. It was not known exactly what had happened, but the horse somehow became unruly and toppled over backward, crushing in the boy's chest. The lad was affianced to a girl of Nazareth and had expected to come home on leave the day the accident happened.

The funeral procession approached the small Greek church beside the Virgin's Well. First came the gendarmes with arms reversed, then a platoon of Boy Scouts in uniform—for Nazareth has a large Scout corps—then the coffin raised high on many hands and draped with the British flag. Black-clad women followed, crooning a strange, Oriental chant to which they marked time by clapping their hands. The men, bearing lighted candles, entered the body of the church, while the women looked on from the upper galleries. When the droning service of the Greek priests was finished, the cortège proceeded up the hill to the little cemetery between Hilway's house

and the road, where the burial took place. It was the men's day. The entire services were conducted by men. But the next day belonged to the women. And the next, and the next—

Following the custom of the two Marys, they came to the grave before daybreak, and, seating themselves beside the newly made mound, they sang their pathetic, sorrowing words for the dead:

Tell the mother to make her best room ready. Let it be clean and well-arranged, for the bridegroom will enter with his bride. . . .

Prosper the new bridegroom. May he be long of life and dearly cherish his beloved

Tell the mother to be happy and joyful, because her son is coming to his own. . . .

But alas, alas

Tell the horses now to step carefully. Tell the priest and those that carry the coffin not to hurry, for his friends wish to salute him and to say good-by

We come to this place, but we cannot see you. Open the grave a little way and let the

fresh wind come to him; and pour this scent upon the bridegroom's hair. . . .

I plant this little tree above your head for memory. All the days of my life I shall remember. . . .

.

3

At ten A. M., a three-seated wagon started up the hill beyond the town. An Arab passenger sat beside the Arab driver. An Arab family consisting of a man, his wife, and small boy occupied the back seat. I had the place between. The wagon was quite creditable—except for one of its brakes which dropped off as we went down the other side of the hill beyond Nazareth toward the little village of Kafr Kenna. Kafr Kenna is probably the site of Cana of Galilee where, the Bible relates, the water was turned into wine for the wedding feast.

Beside the village spring half a dozen shepherds were making excellent music, one after another on a metal flute. (At one time I used to play the flute myself—Boehm system, grenadilla wood, with the closed G-sharp

key. But *this* flute was simply a piece of iron pipe, open at both ends, with five finger holes bored in it.) While repairs were being made on the wagon, I stopped near by and listened to them. Then, after their custom, they offered the flute to me, so I accepted it and prepared in a dignified manner to play. I knew, of course, that I *could* play it. One did not hope to execute the *Valse Chromatique* on five finger holes; but at least one could make a clear, vibrant, civilized note for these old-time people.

I tried it for three minutes. I twisted my face into all the grimaces of the accomplished flautist. In vain I made my upper lip Hibernian, almost prehensile. Not a single peep or toot! Not even a shriek. Only air. I relinquished the flute with dignity and strolled back to the carriage. Ah well . . . Lackaday and odds bodkins . . . What-ho and gazooks, even . . . The flutes of man are devious!

4

Beyond Kafr Kenna the hills opened upon a plain covered with extensive wheat fields on which hundreds of Beduin families were cutting their grain. Camels with great

bales of wheat on each side, like tents walking, passed in their leisurely way to the open-air thrashing floors, where donkeys, running round and round, stamped the grain from its outer husks. Later, when the hot wind was blowing, men tossed the wheat into the air, and the chaff, wafted aside, left the grain to drop back on the thrashing floor.

Undoubtedly this was the method of harvesting which prevailed back in the mist-years before history began. However, at that moment, near a group of red roofs and eucalyptus trees which marked the presence of one of the new Jewish colonies I saw a thrashing machine! It seemed to be a symbol of the swift age of mechanics which is upon us. "But," I thought, "in spite of our inventions, the world keeps on suffering very badly! Even where it is full of fine labor-saving devices, man works just as hard, and seems to be more discontented than ever. What's the trouble? It cannot be with the sciences themselves, for they stand ready to give great and valuable service."

Just the old answer—man. And this time, he has endangered his health if not his very existence by developing his engineering and business and chemistry far beyond that part of

his nature which should equitably and wisely rule those things. Certain aspects of that sickness have been rather ghastly. "Do you remember," I asked myself, "how pleased and interested most of us were when Gatling found that the machine-gun was a better *labor-saving device* than the bayonet (although we did not put it just that way)—and also a little later when our War Department hinted at having a deadlier poison gas than Germany?"

"Nevertheless, all over the world, convalescent man is slowly drawing away from a merely mechanical point of view. It is plain that mechanical supremacy is not enough Our theory of a world expressed solely in terms of bulk and machinery and big business is exploded. There must be more than that"

The road turned to the right along a high crest. At its foot, the Sea of Galilee lay like a newly cut turquoise which a gem cutter has replaced for a moment in its ancient, rugged matrix. Somewhere in those hills off to the left, a vast crowd of people once listened breathlessly to the words of a young Rabbi who traveled about in company with laborers, and poor women, and fishermen. Almost at

the beginning of his talk he had said a strange, new thing: *Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.*

That was a little hard for them to understand. It is a little hard for us to understand to-day. Yet it serves for us now just as it did then. Blessed are they that mourn. . . . Blessed too, is the world's deep, wistful questioning. And even, blessed is some of its revolt and pain. For it shows beyond the possibility of doubt how far the ideal transcends the things we know.

BLUE WATERS

CHAPTER XIX

1

THE town, Tiberias, beside the Sea of Galilee, runs down hill and stops just in time at the water's edge. In fact, it has the appearance of having stepped in and got its feet wet, for a few of the older buildings rise directly out of the water. In more conventional cities we frequently see buildings of white stone. Tiberias has a strange, Ethiopian look. The stones of its dwellings and of the low wall which encircles the land side of the town are black, set in white mortar.

Its climate is tropical. The sun beats down fiercely, for the city lies in the basinlike hollow of the Sea of Galilee, five hundred feet below ocean level. As for the Sea itself it is best described as a sort of mid-course reservoir of the Jordan twelve miles long by seven wide. The Jordan flows in at the north end, loses itself for a while in the blue water of the lake, and then, as though remembering its business, flows out again a full-grown river at the south. Tiberias on the west shore is the only town of

any size on the lake. Its flat roofs are vividly white; its interiors and small, irregular courts are tinted in peculiar shades of blue. The floors of the dwellings consist of large, uneven stones set in bands of smooth plaster. Every Friday the houses are cleaned and the plaster is repainted a light, clear blue.

The whole effect is unusual, exotic. It makes one think of Herod Antipas, who in 16 A. D. built the city for his pleasure on the site of a cemetery and peopled it with riff-raff from the world's ends, for none of the Jews would live in such an unhallowed spot. But to-day ninety per cent of the population is Hebrew.

The sunset from Tiberias, even on a cloudless evening, is a spectacle of enchantment. As the hour approaches, the amphitheater of mountains becomes opalescent, and the lake deepens into a rich robin's-egg blue. Before it stands the strange town with its high-topped fronded palms, and walls of black mosaic set in white plaster and the last shafts of the sun streaking its white domes with yellow gold. A moment of waiting comes. Then, almost imperceptibly, the foreground hills to the north lose the fire from their crests and begin to show the shaded tones of the opal—blue,

violet, green—but all very dusky. South and eastward across the lake the hills as yet feel no shadow. The vanished fire from the north seems to be concentrated there. They glow and smolder in vibrant pink, shot through with yellow light against the brilliant blue of the water. Then the blue veil which has enveloped the north end of the lake drifts slowly to the south, and night comes down over Galilee.

2

At a small, clean hotel beyond the south wall, another letter from Korén was waiting. It was dated a week earlier and read:

I am too sorry about something I must say. Just as you come to Syria, unfortunately, I must go to Palestine. Perhaps I shall stay for a week or perhaps a month, and then I shall go away to Bagdad. I have not spoken with Arovni, but my youngest sister speaks with her sometimes, and she says, "Korén, Arovni weeps for you."

As according to your work, I hope it is going well. Write to me B. P. 450, Haifa.

Yours,
KORÉN.

I was frankly disappointed. I not only wanted to see Korén again but I very much

wished to see Arovni as well. I wrote to him at once asking if he could not arrange with his friend Vartan, who lived in Damascus, so that I might at least catch a glimpse of Arovni. But during the few days I remained at Tiberias no answer came.

3

The Baths of Tiberias lie a mile south of the town. They were famous for curing rheumatism and skin diseases long before the time of Herod. To-day people come from the far cities of Asia Minor, and even from the north coast of Africa, to benefit from their hot, saline waters. The present miserable condition of the baths results from the degraded, half-alive administration of provinces under the former Turkish rule. They consist of two small, squalid buildings containing a general room and a few semiprivate pools; all of which are dirty and dismal enough to give a visitor with any imagination the very diseases he is trying to avoid.

Procuring a bath ticket for five piastres, I followed the servant through a dim passage into a small chamber which was enveloped in warm, moist darkness. Clothing lay all about;

we seemed to be walking over innumerable pairs of shoes. Soon my eyes became somewhat accustomed to the pervading gloom. Through the darkness the outlines of a pool became visible, a pool about the length of an average bath tub and perhaps a little wider. Six *tarbúshes* lay on a bench beside it. Out of the pool protruded six swarthy, long mustached heads. As I looked, the heads nodded in a friendly, hospitable manner and said, "Saïda!" which means "Greetings." I departed.

The eight-piastre bath was in another building a hundred yards away. The pool was twice as large as the other and was unoccupied except for a lone gentleman who sat on the edge preparatory to entering. He put his foot into the water and then withdrew it quickly with sharply indrawn breath. At last, nerving himself, and wearing the expression of a lost soul in Dante's most hectic circle, he lowered his body into the sulphurous brine. Shortly afterward I did likewise. Fellow sufferers, we grinned at each other from opposite ends of the tank.

"The man has just changed the water," he said in French; "that is why it is so hot."

"*Eh bien, vous parlez français!*"

"Yes, I am a Syrian from Damascus. We *have* to speak French! You are an American?" I said that I was and that I expected to go to Damascus myself in a few days.

He laughed. "Perhaps the French will take you for Mr. Kryne." (Crane.)

"Mr. Kryne?"

"Yes. Do you not know about him? Several years ago he was sent by the Peace Conference to see what was the wish of the Syrian people in regard to a mandate. He found that more than anything else they were in favor of an American mandate. What happened to his report in the Peace Conference we do not know.¹ But we do know that the French were given the mandate. . . . Two weeks ago, Mr. Kryne came back."

"Did he come in an official way?" I asked.

"No," said the gentleman, submerging himself to his chin, "I think he came to see his friends. A thousand people gathered in front of the Victoria Hotel and the Hotel d'Orient where he was staying and gave three cheers for a republic. During the next day or two the Syrian men had a parade through the streets and the women another and the school-

¹ We know now.

boys another all favoring a republic. Mr. Kryne left for America. Then the French began with their arrests. They arrested about two thousand in all. One man, Dr. B——, was sentenced to twenty years in prison with hard labor. Another man was given fifteen years, two others received ten years, and many more were banished. “Ah—these miserable French! If we cannot have a republic we want an American mandate. . . .”

But I was thinking what an old and wise statesman had once said. “No country ever was, or ever will be, successful under a mandate.”

At last I got the Syrian gentleman to negotiate with the attendant for a petroleum tin of cold water. As the latter poured it over me the man from Damascus, still neck-deep in the torrid pool, shivered violently.

“*Mon Dieu!*” he cried, “you are murdering yourself!”

“Do you never use cold water like that?”

“But no!” he said, shuddering. “In Syria? never! It is barbarous. It is *terreeble!*”

I made motions to the servant for still another tin of water. But in the meantime I was thinking about the wise old statesman and

his remark about mandates. I was thinking that probably he was right.

4

At the north end of the lake, three hours' walk from Tiberias, lie the ruins of Capernaum. The road runs for the most part along the shore of the lake. It is a beautiful road, at first rising forty or fifty feet above the water, then dropping into a small, fertile valley filled with palms and pepper trees. Beyond the valley rises a headland; and on the other side of the headland, at the nearer end of a green, luxuriant plain bordering the lake, is a village consisting of a few mud huts with reed-walled sleeping quarters in their roofs. Fewer huts could hardly be called a village. This is Mejdal, the ancient Magdala, and somewhere near this spot was the home of Mary Magdalene.

The ruins of Capernaum are surrounded by a high wall. Franciscan monks in charge of the excavations have uncovered a building of the finest white marble, which was undoubtedly used as a temple by the Jews during the first years of the Christian era, when the Sea of Galilee was surrounded by rich and thriving

cities. Jesus of Nazareth loved the cities along the north shore of the lake. The greater part of his ministry took place there during what was probably the happiest and most inspiring time of his life.

Near by he sounded that splendid code, the Sermon on the Mount, and here he met the Pharisees and was questioned by them. One likes to think that laughter was sometimes on his lips. Even when his enemies questioned him there seems frequently to have been a smile. “. . . If *I* by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do *you* cast them out?” Should one who in his adolescence framed questions which puzzled the Sanhedrin, be worried at the age of thirty by questions of the Sanhedrin’s inferiors?

There was tragedy here too. Tragedy, it seems, greater than Calvary; for he was surrounded by minds which, except at rare intervals, met his loftiest words with material interpretations. “He spoke of heaven, and they disputed as to their relative places on the steps of his throne.” But there is still another side. Those fishermen, those laborers—perplexed, obtuse, illiterate—clung to him steadfastly through a maze of years in which

they groped painfully for understanding. The reward was theirs. It was that fine loyalty and that capacity for great love which gave them the strength to carry on alone.

5

There were signs of unusual activity on a wide, flat-topped hill above Tiberias. Forty white tents crowned its summit. Groups of sun-tanned young men could be seen moving about on its sides or driving heavy wagons across the brow of the hill. At night they brought their horses down to the lake and rode them into the blue water with the buoyancy of lads at play. I walked up the hillside one evening to see what all the commotion was about. No wonder they were buoyant; they were building a city! Its trace ran up the hillside square after square, some streets marked only by the first plowing, others half finished, still others with curbs and paving in place. A five inch pipe-line ran over the top of the hill from the lake. (On walking to Capernaum, I had already noticed a pumping station which was being installed on the shore below.) The far corner of the hill was practically built of stone—basaltic rock that had

been dug up and blasted out to make way for the streets. Here and there a rough foundation had been started, and beside several piles of rugged building blocks, beds of newly mixed lime were smoking.

In front of one of the new foundations I saw the figure of a man. His back was toward me, but there was something familiar about the rotund brown suit and the apologetic way of standing.

“Mischa Yucovitch,” I said, “give an account of yourself!”

His first surprise over, he shook my hand very gravely, but there was a sparkle in his eye. “Well—what do you think of it?” he asked.

I answered: “It looks very fine. Tell me about it.”

“That’s my place there,” he said, pointing to a foundation in front of him. “It’s started already.” Then he told me that when he first left Jerusalem he had gone to Jaffa and Tel-Aviv’ and Safed’ and other Jewish colonies. They had not quite suited him, but he kept on and at last came to Tiberias, where he found a section of the Palestine Labor Corps at work on a new town. The first thing that the

place would need was a general store. Arrangements had been made and the building, as I could see, was already begun. "This just suits me," he said. "Look at the fine view you get; and think of all the people who will be here some day."

"Do you live up there in those tents?" I inquired.

"No, I am with some friends in the town. The tents belong to the Labor Corps—fine young fellows, and girls too. There are about a hundred and fifty of them here. They live four in each tent and do every kind of work, engineering, digging, building, all alike. The girls live the same way, four in a tent. Some of them cook, others do the washing, others the sewing. They change off every day to even it up."

"But what compensation do they get?"

"Those young fellows and girls?" His voice became a little unsteady and he coughed gruffly. "What do they get? Nothing! They just make enough to eat and to buy a few clothes. They're wonderful! They come from the universities and schools all over Europe, and from the best Jewish families in Russia and Poland—young doctors and students and



Most of the sheep in Palestine and Syria are of the "fat-tailed" variety. This accumulation of adipose tissue is to a sheep what a hump is to a camel. If necessary he can use it as food.

writers. . . . And now they work with their hands almost for nothing.

“At first I did not understand it myself. I was talking with one young man and asked him, ‘Why are you really doing this work?’ And he said, ‘For the next generation.’ Then I asked him if he was married (because you can easy enough understand a man working for his children). He said, ‘No, I’m not married. But that does not matter. This work is for *everybody* . . .’ What do you think of that!” added Mischa Yucovitch, and he smote me hard upon the back, the way a Jew seldom does, to hide his emotion.

6

“Do you want to see the plans? Come on!” We went up the hill. A group of young men sat at one end of a long mess-tent, busy over a pile of blue prints. They were bronzed and clean—clean with a cleanliness unknown to the natives of Palestine. It was the cleanliness of men who, at the end of a day of hard labor, have had the manhood to scrub off the vestiges of that labor. They wore freshly washed white shirts with collars open, showing the deep-ruddy bronze of their muscular necks.

We looked at the plans. They had been drawn by skilled engineers. Then Mischa Yucovitch showed me the fine points—the distribution of water, the lighting system, the arrangement for beautifying the hillsides with fast growing eucalyptus trees.

“What is the name of the town?”

“Hused-Bait,” he said. “That means—well—it’s kind of hard to explain in English. It means that each one will have his own house. . . .”

He wished to remain for a while with the builders; so I bade them all *Lebe wohl* and walked toward the city. Halfway down the hillside I stopped to look at the night resting so beautifully over the Galilee hills; and as I stood there, from the row of tents far up the slope came the spirited, swinging voices of young men, singing one of the bravest songs in the world:

“*Toreador, en gard-e; toreador—toreador. . . .*”

Their beast is not the toreador’s beast of the sanded ring, nor Ibanez’ ten-thousand-headed human beast who frequents that ring, nor yet the Arabs who will at first oppose them as they have opposed all progress. Their beast is the

land—the parched, rocky soil of the country. But it is only a beast, while they are men. Then, as I stood on the hill's side, something of the wonder of the founding of new cities came to me, and I thought of the Iliad, and battling with the elements under the open sky, and valor, and wide spaces.

And so God rest you, Mischa Yucovitch, struggling up through unwilling flesh toward an ideal. And these courageous young men and women—God rest them too; and all men who are honestly trying to build where there was desert before.

7

A day later I took a boat from Tiberias across the lake to the little railroad village of Samak. An hour beyond Samak the train, crawling by unexpected curves up and up past high waterfalls and rugged gorges, crossed the Syrian frontier.

KORÉN AND—

CHAPTER XX

1

AT the top of one of the pages of a recent volume on Syria, half a sentence appears, carried over from the preceding page. That half sentence standing alone does not express quite what the writer intended, but it has taken on a new and colorful meaning. “. . . Damascus was old when it was built and still flourishes long after it has perished.”

And that seems to be exactly the case! There is little reason to doubt that the broad oasis of Damascus was a camping-place for innumerable tribes centuries before the first permanent buildings were erected. Certainly, it has died several tragic deaths since Tiglath-Pileser the First, he of the heavily braided beard, carried its best citizens to comparatively far-away Assyria. Damascus has been wooed and won by Thebes, Babylon, Antioch, and Nineveh (to say nothing of many minor conquests and conquerors). But in spite of their cave-man tactics, where are they now? Damascus alone remains. Not a decade less than

forty centuries, she still thrills with youthful activity.

At intervals throughout the ages, like Rider Haggard's *Ayesha*, she seems to have found new fire, new vitality somewhere. And, like the dead sailors in the "Ancient Mariner," she goes through all the old motions with more vigor than before. Of all the old-time cities of the Mediterranean, she alone has drunk of the elixir of life, but in her case that elusive prescription is not a mystery. It is the crystal water of the Barada River, which bursts clear and cold from the Anti-Lebanons, gives life to a magnificent oasis, and then having completed its work, dies away in a silent marsh at the edge of the desert.

A fine, broad city this, of flashing sunlight and bazaars and minarets on a wide plain between high mountains. Swift streams flow under charming bridges down the central esplanade. Brimming fountains are everywhere. Here are the colors, the contrasts, the excitements which might well be expected of just such a great trade metropolis lying between civilization and the highways of the desert.

The Great Mosque rises out of the heart of

the city. From the earliest days, its site has been the chief religious center. A temple to an unknown eastern deity stood here, followed by at least two Roman temples, the second of which was converted into a Christian church by Theodosius in 385 A. D. From that time Christians controlled the city for three hundred years. Then came Islam, armed to the teeth, as it is to-day. On a feast night, when the garrison had relaxed its vigilance, Kalid, a famous Arab commander, scaled the eastern wall with a rope ladder and opened the east gate to his men, who at once began to pillage the city. The Damascenes, perceiving that they were lost, immediately surrendered, throwing open the remaining gates to the other Arab generals. The latter, on entering, met the troops of Kalid pillaging from the east gate.

At the ensuing peace conference, which seems to have been a fairly equitable-minded gathering(!), the Arabs decided that half the city had been conquered and that half had surrendered; in consequence of which the Christians were allowed to continue their worship in the west half of the church, while the Moslems used the east half. Christians and Moslems

entered by the same temple gate for nearly a hundred years.

It is said that the head of John the Baptist rests within the ornate sepulchre in the center of the vast basilica. The mosque also abounds in legends of the great warrior, Saladin, whose tomb stands in a small garden a few paces to the north. In 1898 the German Emperor, William II, left a wreath upon that tomb—a symbol, perhaps, of his affection for Moslem military power. But in 1918 the Allies arrived in Damascus and removed the wreath. A little later in the same year they removed the emperor.

2

The breakfast room of the Damascus Palace Hotel was almost empty. Besides myself there was only one other guest—a tall, commanding man of middle age, plainly an American. He too had come from Tiberias. In the station at Samak I had noticed him sitting beside a lady and reading from a large red book, pausing occasionally to tell her something in a firm voice about the Picts being driven out of England. Once he had risen, and, addressing me in a courtly manner, requested a light for his cigar.

Now he sat alone at breakfast, tall and commanding as before, and, with one exception, well groomed. At the Ritz or the Plaza or the Biltmore, or even at some of the less pretentious hostelries, that exception would have attracted considerable attention if not comment. He had nothing on his feet, at least, nothing in the way of footgear. His pedal extremities were covered with white powder. Immediately I knew what his trouble was, and sympathy bade me speak.

“Good morning,” I said.

“Good morning, good morning,” he answered, genially. “Let me see, haven’t we met somewhere?”

“Only in the station at Samak yesterday.”

“Ah, yes. By the way, did you find the mosquitoes bad in Tiberias?”

Bad! Although I have not mentioned it before (not wishing an anti-climax after the affair of the horse-equipment boudoir in the Jericho highlands) there was not one half of one square inch of hands or feet that had not been punctured in Tiberias. This time it was a mosquito, a most pestilential mosquito, one third the size of the garden variety, but at least three times as energetic. It lit, assassinated

you and was away again before you knew it, leaving a tickle that beggars description. The Scotch doctor in Tiberias smiled the whimsical smile of all doctors who have seen their thousandth case of some such humorous ailment, prescribed a soothing lotion, and sent me on my way rejoicing.

I now recounted all these things to my tall fellow citizen, adding that if he wished, I would be glad to lend him the balm for his own use; upon which he replied that I could not bring it too quickly.

“By the way,” he added when I returned, “do you know who I am?”

“No, I do not.”

“Well—I’m * * * * * who was nominated at the last election for President on the * * * * * ticket. Several of the party have come over here to study farm conditions all over the world. And I don’t mind saying frankly that at the next election we are going to have a platform *beyond criticism*. Dudley Field Malone went to Paris to study the economic situation. I have been in Denmark most of the time where the farms are run on a splendid system. Do you know how much return the American farmer gets on the value

of his products? Thirty-six and one half per cent, sir. Do you know how much the Danish farmer gets on his? Seventy—two—and—one—half—per—cent!”

Hurrah! Hurrah! I could almost hear the automobile horns and the wry-necked fifes and the cheering. But it was necessary to restrain the prophetic ear and remark that there was certainly a terrific discrepancy between the two percentages.

“There is,” he said with conviction, “there is. And now I think I will go upstairs and put on some of your lotion. My secretary and I are leaving for Russia this afternoon, and if you do not object, I’ll take this bottle right along with me. I don’t suppose that you will need it again.”

“N-no; no indeed. Take it right along.”

But some day when a new President is sitting at his desk in the White House, haply a stranger may come to him and say, “Your Excellency, do you remember me?” And after the manner of Presidents, he will answer, “As Chief Executive of this mighty republic, I cannot—in the existing circumstances—truthfully say that I do.”

Then the other will reply, "Once at Damascus, in the Damascus Palace Hotel, I gave your Excellency some *valuable assistance* relative to —"

"Ah yes," I hope he will answer quickly; "what, in the course of human events, can I do for you?"

"Nothing, your Excellency, nothing. But as I was passing the White House it occurred to me—just what are the qualifications for a first class Secretary of State?"

3

From the French point of view, Damascus was far from being in a normal condition. Its inhabitants had been thinking too hard and too recently about a republic, in consequence of which there were not less than a thousand native police spies in the city. These gentlemen, while very polite, were extremely interested in Americans. Particularly they seemed to be interested in any American who went about sketching. At last I went to the French Commissioner of Police and, with no difficulty at all, secured permission to sketch anywhere in Damascus.

Between the Moslem and Jewish quarters

there was a desolate area of tumble-down houses and decrepit walls. The place appeared to be deserted—an excellent sketching ground. From a certain spot in this devastation the Great Mosque was visible. I came early one morning, set up my sketching easel, and started to work. Alas, as usual, the desertion and desolation were only temporary. Three minutes had not elapsed before I heard sounds of approach to the rear. I looked around. Standing in back of me, in that ruined, savage place choked with sections of fallen wall and mortar, were three handsome, lithe, dark-eyed young ladies. Their black, glassy hair was neatly arranged after the European manner; they wore high heeled shoes of black satin and stockings of silk; and they were clad in the most delicate of lingerie. Their manner was modest and agreeable. Indeed they might have been taken from the advertising pages of the Boston Transcript or the New York Evening Post. Nevertheless, almost any traveler would have felt a certain naïve surprise at meeting such a sophisticated mirage at the very edge of the desert! As I turned, they raised such veils or scarfs as they carried and covered the lower part of their faces!

Mohammedan ladies? Impossible! All I had ever seen had been enveloped from head to foot in their garments, like so many silk-worms in cocoons.

I continued with my work. Two or three little boys appeared out of nowhere and watched my progress. A gendarme came up and glued his eyes to the canvas. The three ladies came nearer. No one noticed them at all. Then a stout Arab woman in the long, conventional black cape arrived, and an aged Jew with ear locks and a round skull cap edged with fur. He sat down on a stone beside me.

“Englees?” he asked.

“No. American.”

“American? Ah! Plenty rich! I am from Jerusalem. Just now, live *there*,” and he pointed to a nearby alley. At that moment the rhythmic *tum-tum-tum* of Arab music came from one of the ruined houses which I had thought unoccupied.

“Pretty soon, Arab marriage,” said the ancient man. The wedding, it seemed, was to take place late that afternoon. The three young ladies were sisters of the bride. They wanted to see what I was doing, so they had come right out. And what was more, after they

had seen, they lingered, strolling here and there in their high-heeled evening slippers with the greatest sense of dignified decorum. But—Mohammedan ladies! The thing was still impossible!

“Those are very nice young lady,” said the courtly, aged man beside me. “All dressed up. First time wear Englees clothes.” And then I understood. They simply did not know how many articles made a complete set! It was a warm day. They left off the outer garments of their new costumes as naturally as a Turkish gentleman leaves off his collar. (If he happens to be wearing a pearl-backed collar-button, he frequently makes up for his deficiency by turning it inside out.)

And so they walked naïvely about and the little boys romped and kicked up the dust over me and the neighbors and early wedding guests came and went and crowded against my elbow and crowded away again to the sound of sinuous Arabian music.

“How long does the wedding last?” I finally inquired of the aged man.

“Three days,” he said. “You stay?”

“No,” I answered, “I go.” Then I bade him *shalong*, and the others *ma-salam*, and re-

turned rather gloomily with my unfinished drawing toward the hotel. The day was unusually hot. At the broad esplanade of the *Serai* I sat down before a coffee-house and ordered *glace*. Then as I rose to depart an incident occurred which, in fiction, might tend to show a decided lack of invention on the part of the writer, but which in life itself shows only a kindly and generous sense of indulgence on the part of the world in which we live.

Along the street came Korén.

CHAPTER XXI.

1

WE greeted each other like the parents of long-lost prodigal sons.

“Korén—how long have you been in Damascus?”

“Since yesterday—after a week at Beyrout. And you?”

“Since the day before, from Tiberias. Then you did not get the letter I sent to Haifa.”

“No. But we could not have done better if it were arranged.”

“I thought you were going to Palestine!”

“Yes. At the *fabrique* they wished me to go. But I said no, I must remain in the north. Just now there is work to do here. . . . My family is in a village not far away. . . . The weather is good. . . . There are many reasons. . . .”

Arovni. I could see that plainly enough. We sat down in front of the coffee-house and talked of other things. But after a while he became silent and began playing with his sherbet. Then presently he spoke:

“When I left you in Jerusalem I came here to Damascus to the wedding of one of my younger sisters. They did not expect me. I thought I would go directly to the house where the wedding would take place; then they could not stop me from seeing Arovni. But when I came to the city I *could* not. I could not go there against my family. In some manner my brother heard that I was in Damascus. He took a cab and was searching for me and after an hour he came to the coffee-house.

“ ‘Why do you not come to the wedding?’ he asked. Then, since he had said it, I went. She was there. I saw her but did not speak to her. She was forbidden to dance, for, first of all, she would dance with me. I have not seen her since then, but my youngest sister, as I wrote to you, talked between us.”

He flung out his arms in a gesture of appeal.

“I wish I could express those things which Arovni has said. They were so poetic, so beautiful—

“ ‘I have no one here to speak to,’ she said to my sister. ‘Let me sit for a little time beside you that I may tell my true feelings to some one, for I am alone. . . I pray,’ she said,

weeping very much, 'that Korén will marry a girl who will be more beautiful than I and more educated and who is free. It does not matter for me. I am only a girl. But oh, why is he always grieving himself about me—.'

"But my youngest sister said, 'Arovni, he loves you.' Then she changed quickly as a girl will and still weeping said, 'Oh Korén, Korén my dear—I know that if I shall not marry you, I shall never marry anyone else, and I will be loving you to the end of my life, whether it is coming to-morrow or after many years. . . .' Then at last she dried her tears and said, 'Tell him that he has people to talk to and can tell his feelings. I must stay here where I have no one. If I can be patient, he can be patient. We must wait. . . .'"

Korén stopped speaking and began toying with his sherbet again.

"That is good advice, Korén," I remarked, rather lamely.

"Yes, almost always one can wait," he answered. "But just sometimes I am *afraid*. I believe in Arovni. But a girl is not as strong as a man. Perhaps when I am away in Bagdad, they will bring some rich, handsome fellow well known to the family and say, 'This

is the one you are to marry.' And then, because she will not disobey her parents—"

We left the coffee-house, walked down the busy *Souk-el-Kharratin*, and then turned into the *rue Droite*—that street which for countless years has been called Straight. Near by, in the shops of the rug merchants, shimmered the deep, mellow crimsons of Bokhara, the lavish patterns and bright colors of the Caucasus, and the rich reds and blues of Samarkand. All about us seethed the exotic, Oriental commerce of the bazaars. Suddenly Korén stopped and said, "Would you then, still care to see Arovni?"

Would I! But how—

"At this time in the afternoon, she is often at her window sewing. Sometimes I can see her from a corner where two houses meet. It is very quiet there. One must be careful. If they should see me, then they would be sure to give her a room inside on the court where I could not come. You will recognize her," he added; "for she always wears black. She knows that I like black too much."

We turned into a narrow, high-walled lane which was half hidden from the sky by the projecting upper stories of the houses on each

side. At the first turn to the left Korén motioned me to wait, and went forward to an angle where one house extended beyond another.

“Come,” he whispered. I went forward to his side.

3

Arovni. More lovely even, then I had expected. She was sitting at a window about twenty yards away, turned so that the light would fall on her brightly colored sewing. Her profile, delicate as a dryad's yet womanly, framed itself against the deep background of the window like a chaste “portrait of a young girl” by some old, clear-eyed Florentine master. The dark, slightly waving hair was tightly bound in simple coils about her head, making that indescribable, open curve at the back where it rose cleanly up from the white column of her neck.

A pigeon fluttered down on the opposite roof. Arovni turned. Her eyes were large, lustrous, ever so slightly tipped at the outer corners, and veiled with deep lashes. The bird walked along the roof in its foolish, pigeon-toed manner, preened itself, and then flew

away. She followed it a moment with her eyes, then turned back to her work. . . .

“I pray that he will marry a girl who is more beautiful than I and more educated than I and who is free. . . .”

Free!

“Look here, Korén,” I said, as we stepped back into the hollow of the wall, “it seems to me that the ancient tribal law about not being able to marry your sister-in-law’s sister is based on a serious error. No doubt the old-time chieftain who made that law thought he was doing right but did not have the slightest knowledge of biology or eugenics. Ancient taboos of that kind are being better understood all over the world. The time comes when it is better for the world if they are broken.

“After six months in the United States, you would speak English almost perfectly. With English, Armenian, Turkish, and French, you would be assured of work. I have a small apartment in a place called Washington Square in New York City. It is not very handsome, but it has three rooms and a sort of kitchen. If you and Arovni want to make a new beginning away from all this—why not begin there?”

Korén took my hand. “I cannot say how much I thank you,” he said. But I saw by his eyes that he would not accept.

“When you say these things,” he continued, “which for you I know are right, I am much tempted to do as you say. But just in those moments, I remember most strongly the love of my family. You, I think, cannot quite understand. How can I make them suffer some more? I can only tell them again and again what I believe, and some day they too must change as the world is changing. Until then, we must wait. Arovni says that too. We must wait. . . .”

He gripped my hand, and then we turned and went into the city.

IN CONCLUSION

TIME after time, as I have been thinking about the ominous, semi-threatening outlook of the world to-day, a spirited poem by Gilbert Chesterton has come to my mind. It is a poem about Alfred, King of England, who, surrounded by his enemies, goes out into the night and asks the powers of good what thing the future holds. When the answer slowly comes to him, it carries this stirring message: *Only that the sky is growing darker yet, and that the sea is rising higher.*

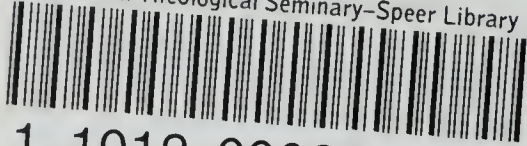
That may be our answer too—a ringing challenge! In spite of the bitter years that the world has just known, in spite of the probability of bitter years ahead, it is for that very reason a finer thing than ever to be alive. To work, and love, and worship, and to make mistakes—terrific mistakes sometimes—and yet to keep on gaining through those mistakes, and not to be swamped by battleships or machines or business but occasionally to catch a glimpse of the great far advance all along

the line—that is enough for the high courage of any man.

These pages happen to be about some of the people in a small country this side of the Jordan River. What I have found among them only strengthens my conclusion about the rest of us. For whether we live in Vladivostok or Central Park West or on the Zuyder Zee, we are all of us this side of Jordan.

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